TELOS

Number 101 FALL 1994

Special Section on:

Is There a "*Telos*" Left in *Telos*? Reflections after 100 Issues

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Tim Luke Toward a North American Critical Theory
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Articles, Notes and Reviews

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Bernard Poche The New Northern League
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Russell Berman Culture in the Conservative Revolution
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Kafka as a Populist: Re-reading "In the Penal Colony"

David Pan

Peculiarity

Franz Kafka's "In the Penal Colony " has almost always been read as the description of a barbaric machine of torture. Yet the first sentence of the story, "It's a peculiar kind of apparatus,"[1] uttered by the officer, does not direct attention to the apparatus itself but to its peculiarity. For the voyager who listens to the officer describing the apparatus, the latter is certainly peculiar as an instrument of torture and execution, but it is also peculiar for the officer in the sense that it belongs to a particular culture which has created it and supported its functioning. The peculiarity extends beyond the machine to the notion of justice of which the apparatus is an integral part. The story contraposes the two notions of peculiarity in order to stage a conflict between two cultures, one represented by the liberal, humanitarian voyager and the other embodied in the traditional justice of the officer. From the viewpoint of liberal humanitarianism, the apparatus is peculiar because of its barbarism and must be eradicated. But from the perspective of a community in which traditions are still alive, the apparatus' peculiarity lies in the fact that it is part of a cultural system "peculiar to" a specific community. The story thus presents two modes of justice opposed to each other in the struggle to determine the fate of the apparatus.

This fate is that of primitive culture when confronted by a universal one. "Primitive" here refers to a small, locally organized culture in which

1. Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," in *The Transformation and Other Stories*, trans. and ed. by Malcolm Pasley (London and New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 127. All further page references to this text will be in parentheses after the quotation.

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laws and authorities are not administratively separated from the people. Tribal cultures are excellent examples of primitive culture, but the latter must also be seen as a modern possibility. In Kafka's story, the issue is not simply a conflict between a Western and a non-Western culture. The penal colony is administered by a European power and both the officer and the new Commandant come from the same tradition. In the story, the primitive culture is part of Europe and the conflict in the colony is between a European primitive and a European civilized perspective on law and culture.

The officer seeks to demonstrate to the voyager the value of his system of justice by emphasizing its peculiarity and thus its ground in the communal will. In contrast to the voyager's understanding of justice in which legality and written laws are the crucial issues, the apparatus' execution process (in its fusion of sentencing and punishment in a collective spectacle) imbeds justice in a process of community legitimation. As a result, the conflict exemplifies the efforts of a primitive culture to maintain its peculiarity and legitimacy when threatened by a dominant universal culture. In order for a culture to remain both distinct to the outside world and legitimate to its members, it must be allowed to construct its own notions of truth and justice — even if these notions happen to conflict with liberal, Enlightenment values.

The officer's depiction of the apparatus and the voyager's evaluation enact this conflict between a local culture's unique identity and a liberal humanitarian legal code seeking to become universally binding. The voyager's universalist justice separates a set of abstract laws from their execution. From this viewpoint, the justice of the apparatus is bound to be condemned both for its lack of written laws and the painfulness of the execution. The officer's primitive justice is based on the idiosyncratic customs of a particular community in which abstract written laws are less important than the collectively-lived experience of justice. Within this system judgment and execution are combined. The perspective on law of the officer and that of the voyager compete in the story to define primitive culture as either a desired possibility or a savage barbarianism.

Before discussing the details of "In the Penal Colony" I would like to investigate the way in which the conflict between the civilized and the primitive perspective on culture occupied Kafka's thoughts before the writing of the story in October, 1914.[2] The cultural divide between Western European and Eastern European Judaism, which was the main focus

2. Hartmut Binder places the date of the writing of "In the Penal Colony" in the period from October 15 to October 18, 1914. The story was not published until 1919. Hartmut Binder, *Kafka Kommentar zu Sämtlichen Erzählungen* (Munich: Winkler, 1975), p. 174

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of Kafka's attention beginning around 1910 and throughout his life, split European Judaism on the basis of precisely those issues which separate the civilized from the primitive. As Evelyn Torton Beck argues, while the voyager represents a Western-Jewish, liberal, cosmopolitan perspective, the culture connected with the apparatus correlates closely with the culture of Eastern European Judaism as seen by Kafka: "The quarrel of the old versus the new suggests the perpetual fight of Jewish Orthodoxy to maintain itself against voluntary assimilation or enforced conversion."[3] But while Beck argues that Kafka condemns the justice of the officer for its brutality and inhumanity,[4] I would like to argue that the apparatus, by embodying an Eastern European Jewish traditionalism, presents the type of organic and peculiar community Kafka attempts to save.

Kafka's Anarchism

Kafka's interest in the issue of community began with his friendship with the Czech anarchist, Michal Mareš, who invited Kafka to several anarchist meetings and demonstrations.[5] Mareš recounts Kafka's attendance at these gatherings and his interest in books by anarchists such as Peter Kropotkin and Michael Bakunin,[6] in which a critique of modern capitalism is presented as a rejection of institutionalized politics in favor of a society organized on a community level without any intervening administrative structures. As Michael Löwy points out, Kafka's anarchism

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3. Evelyn Torton Beck, *Kafka and the Yiddish Theater* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), 149.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 152

5. These groups included Klub Mladych, Vilem Körber and the Czech Anarchist Movement. See Michal Mareš, "Wie ich Franz Kafka kennenlernte," published in Klaus Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka: eine Biographie seiner Jugend 1883-1912* (Bern: Franke Verlag, 1958), pp. 270-271. As Wagenbach notes, Kafka's relation with Mareš is documented not only by Mareš' manuscript, but also by Gustav Janouch and in a postcard written by Kafka to Mareš in December, 1910. (Wagenbach, *op. cit.*, p. 230.) For a further discussion of Kafka's interest in anarchism, see also Michael Löwy, "'Theologia Negativa' and 'Utopia negativa': Franz Kafka," chap. in *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 72, and pp. 82-83.

6. Mareš, *op, cit.*, p. 275. Mareš' account is confirmed by diary entries in which Kafka mentions Kropotkin and Bakunin. In his entry for October 15, 1913, he writes "Don't forget Kropotkin!" Franz Kafka, *The Diaries 1910-1923*, ed. Max Brod (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), p. 233. Kafka mentions Bakunin in his diary entry of March 13, 1915. Kafka, *Diaries*, p. 333. In addition, Gustav Landauer's *Briefe aus der französischen Revolution* appears on two of the book lists put together by Kafka between 1922 and 1924. Jürgen Born, *Kafkas Bibliothek: Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), 178, 183.

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manifests itself as an anti-socialist critique of bureaucracy based on his own experiences with the Workers' Accident Insurance Institute where he worked as a lawyer.[7] This institute provided the first form of workers' compensation for accidents in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and was set up according to new social laws achieved by the workers movement. Yet, as Kafka notes in reference to a workers' demonstration: "The Revolution evaporates, and leaves behind only the slime of a new bureaucracy. The chains of tormented mankind are made out of red tape."[8]

This critique of bureaucracy links Kafka's intellectual perspective with that of anarchists such as Gustav Landauer, who developed a similar critique of socialism.[9] But in contrast to Landauer and other anarchists, Kafka did not pursue an intellectual or political development of anarchist ideas but rather an aesthetic embodiment. According to Mareš, though Kafka was familiar with the anarchist theoreticians already mentioned, he was especially fond of Malwida von Meysenbug's anarchist ideas manifest in a narration of her life story.[10] Kafka's preference for concrete descriptions led him to abandon his anarchist political activities (around 1912) in favor of a growing interest in the Yiddish theater, whose rootedness in a culture of Eastern European Judaism appealed to Kafka's sense for the peculiar.

Western vs. Eastern Judaism

Kafka's views on Eastern Judaism were influenced strongly by Nathan Birnbaum and the Zionist student organization, Bar Kochba.[11] In the face of the contemptuous attitude shared by "the overwhelming majority of Western Jews" toward the cultural backwardness and "physical decadence" of Eastern European Jews,[12] Birnbaum defended the Yiddish language and Eastern European Judaism for their cultural vitality as opposed to the lack of tradition of Western European Jews. The members of the Bar Kochba Society, including Kafka's friends Max Brod and

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7. Löwy, *op, cit.*, pp. 123-124.

8. Gustav Janouch, *Conversations with Kafka*, 2nd ed. and tr. Goronwy Rees (New York: New Directions Books, 1971), p. 120.

9. See Gustav Landauer, *For Socialism*, tr. David J. Parent (St. Louis: Telos Press, 1978).

10. Mareš, *op. cit.*, p. 275. Cf. Malwida von Meysenbug, *Memoiren einer Idealisten*, ed. by Renate Wiggershaus (Frankfurt a\M: Insel, 1985).

11. For an extended discussion of Kafka's relation to Birnbaum's ideas see Guiliano Baioni, "Zionism, Literature, and the Yiddish Theater" in *Reading Kafka: Prague, Politics, and the "Fin de Siècle,"* ed. Mark Anderson (New York: Schocken Books, 1989), pp. 97-102.

12. Baioni describes this attitude by summing up the views expressed by Max Nordau at the 5th Zionist Congress in Basel, 1901. See Baioni, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

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Hugo Bergmann, integrated this positive evaluation of Eastern Judaism into a critique of Western Judaism and of modernity itself. Thus Hans Kohn, in the preface to *Vom Judentum*, a collection of essays published by the Bar Kochba Society in 1913 that found its way into Kafka's personal library,[13] writes: "Today there is a general tendency amongst a few people to go beyond the individual and integrate it into super-individual contexts. Several signs suggest that a shift is taking place in our time, not just for Judaism, but for humanity, which manifests itself externally in the West as a struggle against a mechanizing, de-spiritualizing functionalism and in the East as a reawakening of old cultural realms and the European attempt to appropriate Asian culture."[14] The opposition between Eastern and Western Judaism is at the same time one between an individual-oriented rationalizing modernity and a community-oriented cultural traditionalism. Though this favoring of Eastern over Western Judaism has been interpreted as a proto-fascist expression of Jewish self-hatred,[15] the essays of *Vom Judentum* can be better described as a presentation of an anti-rationalistic, anarchist perspective which is grounded in a Jewish tradition. As Kohn emphasizes: "Zionism is not a science nor a logical system of concepts, and it has nothing to do with racial theories and definitions of the folk. It is impossible to teach someone Zionism through arguments, and all the discoveries of racial and sociological research do not touch us. Zionism lies in another dimension of being. It is not knowledge, but life."[16]

Kafka shares this desire for a type of experience rooted in life and a cultural tradition rather than in science and race, but he carries this desire even further than the writers in *Vom Judentum* by concentrating less on explanations than on particular examples of the experience of such a culture. Thus, in spite of the affinity he feels for Birnbaum's ideas, Kafka criticizes him for his intellectualism, his estrangement from the immediacy and lack of self-consciousness within Eastern European culture. In his diary entry of January 24, 1912, Kafka describes a folksong evening at the Bar Kochba Society: "Folksong evening: Dr. Nathan Birnbaum is the lecturer. Jewish habit of inserting 'my dear ladies and gentlemen' or just 'my dear' at every pause in the talk. Was repeated at the beginning of Birn-

13. See Jürgen Born, *Kafkas Bibliothek: Ein beschreibendes Verzeichnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1990), p. 131.

14. Hans Kohn, "Geleitwort" in *Vom Judentum*, ed. Verein jüdischer Hochschüler Bar Kochba in Prag (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913), p. VI, my translation.

15. See Christoph Stölzl, "Kafka: Jew, Anti-Semite, Zionist," in *Reading Kafka*, *op. cit.* pp. 70-71.

16. Kohn, "Geleitwort" in *Vom Judentum*, *op. cit.*, p. VIII, my translation.

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baum's talk to the point of being ridiculous. But from what I know of Löwy I think that these recurrent expressions, which are frequently found in ordinary Yiddish conversations too, such as '*Weh ist mir*' or '*S'ist nischt*,' or '*S'ist viel zu reden*,' are not intended to cover up embarrassment but are rather intended, like ever-fresh springs, to stir up the sluggish stream of speech that is never fluent enough for the Jewish temperament."[17] In attempting to reproduce the linguistic gestures of Eastern Jewish culture, Birnbaum does not manage to "stir up" his speech, but only to demonstrate his embarrassment and, consequently, also his alienation from the Eastern Jewish spirit.

This incident illustrates the fundamental problem Kafka struggled with during this period in his writing. As much as he himself as a Western European Jew desired an integration with the traditional organic community of Eastern Judaism, all his attempts could only bring into relief an inner alienation from all community spirit. This alienation manifests itself in his diaries as well as in his literary works through a language of gestures. Kafka's diary entries of this period provide numerous descriptions of the two types of gestures depicted above: the alienated gesture of Birnbaum, attesting to a contradiction between intention and execution, and the expressive gesture of Eastern Jewish communities, unself-consciously manifesting a vital spirit, "like ever-fresh springs."

The Vital vs. the Empty Gesture

Kafka's dissatisfaction with the argumentative method of the Western Jewish Bar Kochba Society leads to his engagement with the Yiddish theater. Max Brod shared this feeling and provides a description of his and Kafka's passion for the performances of the Yiddish theater at the Café Savoy: "I, for example, was a frequent member of the audience at the Café Savoy, and learned a lot there towards appreciating Jewish folklore. But Franz, after the first time I took him there, entered into the atmosphere completely." Brod then continues to describe the opposition he and Kafka felt separated the academics at Bar Kochba from the actors of the Yiddish theater: "It was the time when I first came into contact with Zionists and the Zionist outlook, and I passed their influence on to my friend, influences which came from the Prague club 'Bar-Kochba,' and particularly from the wonderful Hugo Bergmann. At first Kafka's attitude was one of rejection. I, too, was not at first in agreement with everything that was preached to

17. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

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me on this side — often in a form all too fine and polished — and in the beginning used to go to the tiny, not very inviting Café Savoy on Ziegen Square, where they gave the generally despised melodrama as a direct protest against Zionistic academics. I zealously championed the thesis that however near to unconscious humor and trash they might come, from the performances of these actors more could be learned about the essence of Judaism than from the philosophic deductions of Jews of the West who were, it is true, striving to get to the people, but who were at heart already estranged from them."[18] The anti-intellectual stance Brod describes is also evident in Kafka's own diary, which demonstrates his fascination with the Yiddish theater and his friendship with Yitzhak Löwy, one of the actors from the troupe performing in Prague. This fascination derived from his admiration for the gestural freedom animating this theater and his yearning for a community-oriented traditional culture from which he had been alienated by his upbringing as a Western Jew.[19]

In his first description of the Yiddish theater, Kafka focuses on two actors in caftans played by a woman and her husband. They present for Kafka an excellent example of beings who live entirely through expressive gestures. He describes them as "people who are Jews in an especially pure form because they live only in the religion, but live in it without effort, understanding, or distress. They seem to make a fool of everyone, laugh immediately after the murder of a noble Jew, sell themselves to an apostate, dance with their hands on their earlocks in delight when the unmasked murderer poisons himself and calls upon God, and yet all this only because they are as light as a feather, sink to the ground under the slightest pressure, are sensitive, cry easily with dry faces (they cry themselves out in grimaces), but as soon as the pressure is removed haven't the slightest specific gravity but must bounce right back up in the

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18. Max Brod, *Franz Kafka: A Biography*, tr. G. Humphreys Roberts and Richard Winston (New York: Schocken Books, 1960), pp. 110 and 112.

19. Kafka's relation to Löwy and the Yiddish theater is documented in his diary, beginning October 5, 1911 and continuing through most of 1912. See also the letters to Felice Bauer of 1912 and 1913. For two excellent accounts, see Beck *op. cit.*, pp. 12-30 and Baioni, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-110. Kafka describes his own Western-Jewish alienation from tradition in a November 1920 letter to Milena Jesenska. "After all, we both know numerous examples of the Western Jew; as far as I know I'm the most Western-Jewish of them all. In other words, to exaggerate, not one second of calm has been granted me; nothing has been granted me, everything must be earned, not only the present and future, but the past as well — something which is, perhaps, given every human being — this too must be earned, and this probably entails the hardest work of all." Kafka, *Letters to Milena*, tr. Philip Boehm (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), p. 217.

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air."[20] Kafka's fascination with the Yiddish theater focuses on the gestural freedom of these actors, who on the one hand "performed in the same manner in which the Hasidim prayed in the synagogue, accompanying the movement of their arms and body with religious chants,"[21] and on the other hand provided the model for the gestural expressiveness of many figures in Kafka's stories.[22]

Yet, gestures do not play a unified role in Kafka's work. He praises the gestural freedom of the Yiddish theater and Eastern Judaism, but criticizes the gestures of his own Western culture, in which traditions have degenerated into empty and alienated gestures. He compares for instance the circumcision of his nephew with circumcisions in Russia. After describing the Western circumcision, he writes: "Today when I heard the moule's assistant say the grace after meals and those present, aside from the two grandfathers, spent the time in dreams or boredom with a complete lack of understanding of the prayer, I saw Western European Judaism before me in a transition whose end is clearly unpredictable and about which those most closely affected are not concerned, but like all people truly in transition, bear what is imposed upon them. It is so indisputable that these religious forms which have reached their final end have merely a historical character, even as they are practised today, that only a short time was needed this very morning to interest the people present in the obsolete custom of circumcision and its half-sung prayers by describing it to them as something out of history."[23] In contrast to the alienation from tradition on the part of the Western Jews, who in their gestures simply "bear what is imposed upon them," Kafka demonstrates the community consciousness of Russian Jews by describing in detail (probably from a conversation with Löwy) the

20. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

21. Baioni, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

22. Baioni writes: "Before most German Expressionists, Kafka had already made use of gestures in his early text "Description of a Struggle" to portray the explosive inner desires and neuroses of his protagonists. In the movements of these two figures in caftans (who, as Max Brod observed, are also the first incarnation of the land surveyor's assistants in *The Castle*), he no doubt found a parallel to the protagonists' wild gestures in his own first story." Baioni, *op. cit.*, p. 103. For a further discussion of the relation between Yiddish theater and gesture in Kafka's work, see Beck, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, 8, 27-28, 43. For other descriptions of the role of gesture in Kafka's work, see Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, tr. Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), pp. 3-9 and Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), p. 120.

23. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-148 (December 24, 1911). Cf. also *Tagebücher*, eds. Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller, and Malcolm Pasley (New York: Schocken, 1990), pp. 311-312.

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various customs surrounding birth and circumcision in Russia: the tablets covered with cabalistic symbols and the constant presence of children around the mother between the time of birth and the circumcision in order to protect against evil spirits, the all night vigil held with the mother before the day of the circumcision, and the presence of over 100 friends and relatives at the circumcision. After this description of Eastern European customs, Kafka locates the peculiarity of Judaism, and of Russian Jews in particular, in their community life: "so it is even more peculiar to the Jews that they come together at every possible opportunity, whether to pray or to study or to discuss divine matters or to eat holiday meals whose basis is usually a religious one and at which alcohol is drunk only very moderately. They flee to one another, so to speak."[24] On the side of the Western Jews, Kafka describes a loss of tradition which leads to a degeneration of gestures into empty formulas (both in the case of Birnbaum' speech and the Western circumcision), bereft of the vitality which guarantees their meaning and continuation. On the side of the Eastern Jews, Kafka describes active religious rituals and a community consciousness.

From the perspective of Eastern Judaism, the Western Jewish loss of tradition is regarded with contempt. This contempt is directed not only at completely assimilated Jews, but even at Jews who wish to regain their lost traditions. In his description of the second of a series of discussion meetings held by the "Jüdischer Volksverein" in order to increase understanding between Eastern and Western Jews, Kafka notes: "The Eastern Jews' contempt for the Jews here. Justification for this contempt. The way the Eastern Jews know the reason for their contempt, but the Western Jews do not. For example, the appalling notions, beyond all ridicule, by which Mother tries to comprehend them. Even Max, the inadequacy and feebleness of his speech, unbuttoning and buttoning his jacket. And after all, he is full of the best good will. In contrast a certain Wiesenfeld, buttoned into a shabby little jacket, a collar that it would have been impossible to make filthier worn as his holiday best, braying yes and no, yes and no. A diabolically unpleasant smile around his mouth, wrinkles in his young face, wild and embarrassed movements of his arms. But the best one is a little fellow, a walking argument, with a sharp voice impossible to modulate, one hand in his pocket, boring towards the listeners with the other, constantly asking questions and immediately proving what he sets out to prove. Canary voice. Tosses his head. I, as if made of wood, a clothes-rack pushed into the middle of the room. And yet

24. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 152 (December 25, 1911), translation modified.

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hope."[25] This passage depicts the composite range of gestures in "In the Penal Colony." First, there is the vitality of the Eastern Jews, which Kafka depicts not as a perspective or argument but only as a feeling. In the story, such an active community is only present as an image of a lost past in the officer's descriptions and the antics of the soldier and the condemned man, resembling the actors in caftans of the Yiddish theater. Afterwards, Kafka describes the two basic types of gestures which express the Western Jewish attitude toward the Eastern Jewish community spirit: on the one hand, the "little fellow, a walking argument" who presents an uncomprehending argumentative rejection of Eastern Judaism; on the other, Brod's impotent and embarrassed attempt to understand Eastern Judaism, embodied in the helpless gesture of buttoning and unbuttoning his jacket. The liberal, Western position based on argument is the position of the voyager who cannot comprehend the perspective of the officer. The officer's attempt to describe the apparatus and thus enter into a theoretical debate, like Brod demonstrating "the best good will," is also unable to prevent the demise of the apparatus.

Kafka's description of himself as "made of wood, a clothes-rack pushed into the middle of the room" locates his own position within this tableau as one who is as unable to participate in Eastern Jewish culture as he is critical of Western Jewish culture. Even his own plan for a "minor literature" rooted in community involvement, which he sketches in the same set of diary entries as the description of the circumcisions,[26] becomes an intellectual exercise alienated from any true community life. After writing an outline of the characteristics of a minor literature, he notes: "How weak this picture is. An incoherent assumption is thrust like a board between the actual feeling and the comparative description."[27] Like Kafka's body, thrust into the middle of the room and paralyzed by the estrangement of Eastern form Western Jewish culture, the board which separates the "genuine feeling" from the "comparative description" is a manifestation of a fundamental contradiction between the two perspectives.

Kafka's work is marked by a conflict between his hope, resulting in a search for ways to break down this barrier, and his despair over the

25. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 332 (March 11, 1915).

26. For an extended discussion of Kafka's plan for a minor literature, see Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *op cit.*, pp. 16-27.

27. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 155, translation modified. This passage is located in the wrong position in this edition. In Kafka's original notebooks, this passage appeared directly underneath the "character sketch of the literature of small peoples." See Kafka, *Tagebücher*, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

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immutability of the barrier. He first attempts to dissolve the barrier in his engagement with Yiddish theater and language. As part of this project, he organized an evening of dramatic readings by Löwy for the Bar Kochba Society, taking care of everything from conferring with the members to drafting the program, setting up the stage, numbering the seats, selling the tickets, and, finally, writing and presenting the "Introductory Talk on the Yiddish Language" which preceded Löwy's performance.[28] He sought to convince his Western audience that even though "no explanation on the spur of the moment can be of any help to you" there are nevertheless "active in yourselves forces and associations with forces that enable you to understand Yiddish intuitively."[29] The entrance into the Yiddish language is also an intuitive communion with an Eastern European Jewish culture. The primary obstacle to this intuition is fear. For, as Kafka notes in his opening remarks, "many of you are so frightened of Yiddish that one can almost see it in your faces."[30] But just as Kafka differentiates between two types of gestures, he also describes two types of fear. While fear of the Yiddish language prevents an intuition of it, "once Yiddish has taken hold of you and moved you . . . you will come to feel the true unity of Yiddish, and so strongly that it will frighten you, yet it will no longer be fear of Yiddish but of yourselves. You would not be capable of bearing this fear on its own, but Yiddish instantly gives you, besides, a self-confidence that can stand up to this fear and is even stronger than it is."[31] The counterpart to the Western fear of the Yiddish language is the Eastern fear of oneself, stemming from the experience of the power of inner "forces" which also create self-confidence. Thus even the Eastern European unity with the gesture is not without contradiction, but is predicated upon an intuition of the frightening power of forces already in oneself. Though this fear is based on a certain self-alienation, i.e., a sensation of forces over which one has no control, the direct intuition, rather than the abstract knowledge, of such forces, is the prerequisite for a communion with them.

Kafka realizes that even a possible participation in this power can only be short-lived and is limited by the fundamental estrangement of Western Judaism from an active cultural tradition. "Enjoy this self-confidence as much as you can! but then, when it fades out, tomorrow and later — for how could it last, fed only on the memory of a single evening's recitations!

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28. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181.
29. *Reading Kafka*, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-266.
30. Kafka, "Talk on the Yiddish Language," *op. cit.*, p. 263.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 266

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— then my wish for you is that you may also have forgotten the fear. For we did not set out to punish you."[32] The participation in the forces which underlie the self depends on the communal repetition of an aesthetic experience which defines the individual's relation to his own body. This aesthetic experience must be regularly repeated in order to prevent the memory from fading. The issue for Kafka here as well as in "In the Penal Colony," is consequently not so much punishment as aesthetic ritual.

Irreconcilable Differences

"In the Penal Colony" depicts the impossibility of ever transcending the barrier between the "genuine feeling" of the officer's organic community and the distanced perspective which presupposes any "comparative description," such as that of the voyager. Kafka constructs the characteristics of the apparatus in such a way as to make it completely unacceptable to a liberal, Enlightenment perspective. As a result, the story reenacts the unbridgeable gap Kafka perceives between his own Western Jewish perspective and the peculiarity of Eastern Judaism. If the "Introductory Talk on the Yiddish Language" was not a form of punishment but an attempt to mediate, if only for a brief moment, the peculiarity of Yiddish to a Western Jewish audience, "In the Penal Colony" depicts the impossibility of such a mediation by counterposing two incompatible modes of punishment, corresponding to the two modes of gesture Kafka describes in his diaries. In contrast to his earlier engagement for the Yiddish theater in 1912 and the beginning of a sense of "hope" in spite of differences at the Western and Eastern evening in 1915 mentioned above, "In der Strafkolonie" presents in the fate of the apparatus an intractable conflict between the primitive Eastern Jewish culture of the officer and the civilized Western Jewish culture of the voyager.[33]

The total lack of communication between the two perspectives determines Kafka's construction of the apparatus as something which would be completely unacceptable to a Western, liberal perspective.

The voyager sees primitive culture as barbaric, and most readers

32. *Ibid.*

33. Brod dates Kafka's view that the Western and the Eastern aspects of Judaism were incompatible to the period preceding the writing of "In the Penal Colony." Kafka's insistence on his own Western Jewish separation from the community spirit of Eastern Judaism even leads in 1913 to the only serious quarrel between the two during their long friendship. Brod saw this as a result of their differing ideas as to whether Western Jewish individualistic attitudes might be reconciled with an Eastern Jewish community spirit. Brod, *Kafka*, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

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share this judgment because a prejudice toward the position of the voyager is built into the structure of the text. Though the story consists of a clash between two different understandings of justice, the narrative encourages an identification of the reader with the voyager and creates a bias against the justice of the officer — this bias itself being an enactment of the difficulties of a primitive culture attempting to defend itself against the universalizing tendencies of a liberal perspective. Yet, rather than uncritically articulating this latter perspective, the narrative eventually turns against the voyager by demonstrating that his position of objectivity and neutrality is in fact an impossibility. The voyager's claim to neutrality functions as a cover for the spread of a liberal ideology based on justice as written law and a defense of individual rights over community identity.

The story articulates this critique of liberal ideology by encouraging the reader's initial identification with the voyager's perspective in order to focus on this identification later on. This identification is established when the officer explains the apparatus while the voyager, essentially in the same position as the reader, is simply a passive observer. The narrator reinforces this passivity by noting that "[i]t seemed to have been no more than politeness that had prompted the voyager to accept the invitation of the Commandant, who had suggested that he witness the execution of a soldier. . ." (127). The narrator makes repeated references to the voyager's lack of interest, but the voyager's passive attitude is soon dispelled when the officer explains the mechanical functioning of the apparatus. The voyager's growing interest in the apparatus is connected to the description of it and its functioning, and the reader's interest is also focused on these technical aspects. But as much as this initial interest seems to be an objective reaction, this understanding of the apparatus already prefigures a particular interpretation of the execution which reduces it to a physical process separate from any judgment.

The distinction between this interpretation and the officer's perspective only becomes clear through a series of misunderstandings on the part of the voyager and explanations on the part of the officer. Throughout this process, the reader's attention is focused on the explanations of the officer. But the voyager's questions reinforce the identification of the reader with the voyager and his perspective. As a consequence, the reader is apt to follow the voyager who, "conditioned by European ways of thought," (142) only sees the divergences of the apparatus from his own idea of justice and is unable to appreciate its peculiar logic.

The first point of misunderstanding demonstrates both the difference between the two perspectives on justice and the inability of the voyager to

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appreciate the officer's perspective. When the officer explains that "it is to the harrow that the actual carrying out of the sentence belongs," (131) the voyager, not understanding that the process of judgment and execution are inseparable, asks about the pronouncement of the judgment which for him must occur before the execution: "And what in fact is the sentence?" (131). The officer, in his turn, because he does not recognize the validity of a judgment separate from its execution — a content separate from a form — misinterprets the voyager's question as about "the form that our sentencing takes. . . " (131). Accordingly, the officer responds "Our sentence does not sound severe. The condemned man has the commandment that he has transgressed inscribed on his body with the harrow" (131). It is only as an afterthought that the officer unwittingly answers the voyager's question by telling him the law the prisoner had broken: "'This condemned man, for instance' — the officer indicated the man — 'will have inscribed on his body; Honour thy superiors!'" (131). The misunderstanding continues, however, as the voyager, interested in the fate of the prisoner, questions further: "Does he know his sentence?"(131). The voyager understands justice conceptually; and his expectation is that the prisoner has had the opportunity to know and understand the judgment against him. When the officer answers "No," the voyager reacts with surprise, repeating his question again. "He doesn't know his own sentence?" (131).

The voyager also expects that the prisoner has had the opportunity to present a spoken defense and asks: "Do you mean that the man still doesn't know how his defence was received?" (132). When the officer responds that the prisoner was not given the opportunity to present a spoken defense, the voyager does not attempt to understand the perspective but is immediately outraged by the officer's responses because they do not conform to his understanding of justice: "'But he must have had the opportunity to defend himself,' said the voyager, and rose from his seat" (132). For his part, the officer is equally mystified by the voyager's questions. On hearing the first question, "he paused for a moment as if expecting the voyager to give some reason for his question. . . " (132). He answers the next question, "smiling at the voyager as if expecting to hear further strange communications from him" (132). Finally, the officer answers the voyager's last question, "looking in another direction, as if he were talking to himself and wished to spare the voyager the embarrassment of being told such self-evident things" (132).

Unlike the voyager, who insists on the prisoner's intellectual knowledge of the judgment, the officer is concerned with its form, the execution,

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which mediates a direct experience of the law. When the voyager is surprised to hear that the prisoner has not heard the judgment against him, the officer responds that such a pronouncement would be senseless. "There would be no point in announcing it to him. You see, he gets to know it in the flesh" (132). While the voyager insists on the importance of discourse and debate, the officer emphasizes the primacy of bodily experience.

Though the officer is as convinced as the voyager of the obviousness of his own position, the earlier identification of the perspective of the voyager with that of the reader, coupled with the narrative's casting of the voyager in the role of inquisitor and the officer in that of an accused respondent, biases the reader in favor of the obviousness of the voyager's position. The narrator's alignment of the voyager's perspective with the reader's insures that both will regard the matter-of-factness of the officer's answers not as a sign of the coherence of his ideas but of "this officer's limited understanding" (133).

The two perspectives are incommensurable. Yet this predicament is understood by the voyager and the reader as a sign of the barbarity of the officer's system of justice. From a position of neutrality, the voyager now moves to a position of interest and even intervention. He struggles to maintain his former position. He realizes that any action against the officer's legal system would be on the part of a foreign power with no right to intervene in the colony's affairs. But despite his resolve to remain neutral, he cannot help condemn the apparatus' injustice and inhumanity (138). The mere fact of his observation of the apparatus has led him to the position of a judge who condemns the officer's understanding of law.

Until the very last description of the officer in the story, the narrator has forced the reader to adopt the perspective of the voyager in order to judge the officer. Thus this last description is still framed by the thoughts of the voyager: "In doing so he caught sight, almost against his will, of the face of the corpse. It was as it had been in life; no sign of the promised deliverance could be detected; what all the others had found in the machine, the officer had not found; his lips were pressed firmly together, his eyes were open and had the expression of life, their look was calm and convinced, through his forehead went the point of the great iron spike" (152). After this description introduced by voyager, the narrator makes a radical shift. Instead of ending the story here, Kafka inserted a blank space with three asterisks indicating a break in the narration. After the break, the narrator continues the story without the officer: "As the voyager, with the soldier and the condemned man behind him, reached the

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first houses of the colony the soldier pointed to one of them and said: 'Here is the tea-house'" (152).

The continuation of the story after the officer's death and his consequent disappearance as an object of judgment forces the reader to focus on the voyager. This redirection of the narrative undermines the possibility of a neutral perspective. Yet, because the reader has been carefully manipulated into adopting the voyager's perspective as if it were neutral, the reader is now at a loss concerning the new perspective. With the focus on the voyager, the reader is suddenly faced with the prospect that the voyager was not in fact a passive observer but also a protagonist. At this point, the reader must consider the voyager's perspective and begin to judge it rather than assume it, while reconsidering the perspective of the officer in order to determine to what extent it has been obscured by the voyager's prejudices.

The focus on the voyager at the end of the story, in pointing out that his system of justice has now been generalized and is the only remaining one in the colony, reveals that the story was about a conflict between two systems of justice rather than an objective depiction of the apparatus. What the reader had previously taken to be the objective perspective from which to observe the apparatus now turns out to be one of the biased opponents. Each of the two competing systems of justice has its own interpretation of the apparatus and its own form of execution.

Modernism and Myth

Though the text ends with a critical attitude toward the voyager, interpretations of the story have generally joined the voyager in condemning the apparatus, not only because of the narrator's careful orchestration of the reader's responses to the officer, but also because the readers have all shared a liberal perspective from which the officer's justice must be condemned for its violence and arbitrariness.[34]

Before uncritically condemning the officer, however, it is necessary to understand the logic of his position. Walter Sokel describes this logic by presenting the officer's justice as an example of modern irrationalism. He lists the ideas presupposed by the officer's system of justice — sacrifice, the importance of the mythic over the material, the centrality of

34. Though Heinz Politzer recognizes the critique of the voyager in the ending, his only comment is that the voyager may not be sufficiently committed to his Enlightenment principles and does not condemn the apparatus emphatically enough. See Heinz Politzer, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 110-111.

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death and pain, the connection between truth and experience — and places them under the rubric of fascism.[35] While he provides a relatively accurate list, his equation of these ideas with fascism obscures what is at stake. Although fascists used them, these ideas were also current in anarchist groups such as the Bar Kochba Society, and Kafka takes up the basic tenets of this anarchist primitivism in order to criticize the justice based on the voyager's written law. The officer's justice presents a *desideratum* within turn-of-the-century German legal theory in which the source of justice lies not in laws or decrees imposed by the state but in the community's beliefs and traditions.[36] Like the officer's justice which emphasizes the mythic over the material and the connection between truth and experience, Kafka's prose attempts to create a link between law and myth, truth and experience. He does so by dissolving the distinction between the real and the fantastic.

As Tzvetan Todorov notes, the strict separation of the real and the fantastic is not typical of 20th century modernist texts but of a 19th century structure of thought resulting from a positivist worldview in which the fantastic and the metaphysical are sharply differentiated from the real.[37] Todorov distinguishes between the 19th century literature of the fantastic, which presupposes the matter/mind opposition, and myth, in which this opposition is unknown.[38] He then points to Kafka as an example of a 20th century prose in which "[w]ords have gained an autonomy which things have lost,"[39] resulting in a similar collapsing of

35. Walter H. Sokel, *Franz Kafka: Tragik und Ironie: Zur Struktur seiner Kunst*, (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1976), p. 128, "Most of the elements which characterize the penal colony can be counted among the implements of modern irrationalism: the glorification of sacrificial death as the fulfillment of life; the nostalgic enthusiasm for a social structure in which not the useful (harbor works), but ritual and cult are at the center of community life; the idea of limit situations, the discovery of true existence at the edge of the abyss and of death; the veneration of physical pain on the basis of its presentation of the purest truth, i.e. pure experience, and the equation of truth with experience expressed in this view of pain. The system of punishment anticipates precisely the singular combination of sophistication, brutality and solemn idealism with which National Socialism and Fascism were able to fascinate a portion of the European intelligentsia."

36. One of the most important legal theorists defending this position was Karl Binding. He writes for example: "All objective law is a declaration of the communal will that a specific conception of directed life conduct should become a binding rule," Karl Binding, *Grundriß des deutschen Strafrechts, Allgemeiner Teil*, 8th edition (Leipzig, 1913; reprint Aalen: Scientia, 1975), p. 67.

37. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973), pp. 73-74.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

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the boundary between the fantastic and the real.[40] "The 'normal' man is precisely the fantastic being; the fantastic becomes the rule, not the exception. . . . Here in a word is the difference between the fantastic tale in its classic version and Kafka's narratives: *what in the first world was an exception here becomes the rule.*"[41] Though Todorov does not explicitly make this connection, one can infer from his discussion that the structure of Kafka's prose is similar to the structure of myth. When the fantastic has become the rule, as in Kafka, the same ignorance of the differentiation between matter and mind, literal and symbolic, dominates.[42] In both cases, the real and the fantastic exist on the same plane and are treated similarly.

The two elements which define Kafka's prose are 1) the dissolution of the distinction between the real and the fantastic (or metaphysical) and 2) the connection between truth and experience. Kafka's prose thus shares the formal characteristics of the apparatus' system of justice in which the pronouncement of the law and the execution of the prisoner are combined in the single aesthetic event staged by the apparatus. In both cases a metaphysical idea cannot be separated from its material expression. While the elements of Kafka's narrative cannot be distinguished from the truth of the narrative, in the case of the apparatus there is no distinction between the everyday world of experience and the truth of law. Both the apparatus and the narrative create the metaphysical as an enactment and a performance in which experience and truth coincide.[43]

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40. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

41. *Ibid,*. pp. 173-174.

42. Though this reading of Kafka's story as a form of myth recalls arguments made in earlier religious readings by Erwin R. Steinberg, for example, the present reading is different in that it is based on an understanding of myth which sees it as a story in which the real and the fantastic are not distinguished. Consequently, here myth is a performance with an inherent exemplary meaning. By contrast, in the religious reading the elements of the story symbolize different religious figures, and the text as a whole functions as a religious allegory. Thus in Steinberg's interpretation of the two Commandants, the old Commandant is the God of the Old Testament while the new Commandant is the God of the New Testament. See Erwin R. Steinberg, "Die zwei Kommandanten in Kafkas 'In der Strafkolonie'," in Maria Luise Caputo-Mayr, ed., *Franz Kafka: Eine Aufsatzsammlung nach einem Symposium in Philadelphia* (Berlin: Agora, 1978). See also Austin Warren, "The Penal Colony," in Angel Flores, ed., *The Kafka Problem* (New York: New Directions, 1946), pp. 140-2.

43. Adorno describes this mythic aspect of Kafka's prose as a union of the literalness of the text (whereby every word can only be taken for what it is and nothing more) with a *déjà vu* effect, by means of which the text refers to experiences outside the text. See Theodor W. Adorno, "Notes on Kafka," in *Prisms* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1981), pp. 246-248.

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Law as Writing vs. Law as Art

As opposed to this mythic approach, in which the material and the spiritual co-exist within a single dimension of experience, the voyager's understanding of law separates the ideal law from its mundane execution. He separates the horrifying mechanical functioning of the apparatus from the creation of justice, execution from the law, the physical from the metaphysical aspect. This separation allows the voyager to reject the physical aspect (the apparatus itself) and to keep the metaphysical aspect (justice) as an "objective" entity based on rational, humanitarian justifications rather than on the functioning of the apparatus.[44]

Critiques of the apparatus which condemn it for its collapsing of signifier and signified begin with this understanding of law and consequently overlook the specifically mythic understanding of law underlying the apparatus' justice. Thus for Clayton Koelb, the function of the apparatus is to inscribe the text of the law onto the prisoner's body. Because the connection between signifier and signified is considered arbitrary, the functioning of the apparatus is interpreted as a depiction of the catastrophic consequences of an attempt to force a particular textual meaning onto the psyche of a reader.[45] Koelb's equation of law with writing ends by destroying the concept of law altogether. Posing as a mediator of justice, the apparatus is actually the instrument of a violent and arbitrary paternal

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44. Just as the voyager in the story distinguishes the actual process of execution from the ideal of justice, in Politizer's model parable is characterized by an allegorical structure in which the natural and the supernatural are distinct. Like the voyager, Politzer presupposes a clear differentiation between natural and supernatural reality, characterizing Kafka's texts as a set of parables in which the link between the natural and the supernatural has been cut and the allegory has no obvious meaning. (Politzer, *op. cit.*, p. 98) For Politzer, Kafka's stories are parables without a commonly accepted belief system to which they might refer. Thus the meaning of these parables becomes ambiguous. (21-22) Rather than relating a literal to a symbolic meaning, only the former is present. In the end, however, Politzer reads "In the Penal Colony" as a parable about the unattainability of metaphysical truth.Yet in the story the officer explicitly outlines the specific parameters within which a metaphysical meaning can be articulated within the execution process. Politzer fails to see this model for metaphysical truth because of his own bias against the apparatus, "a relic from the times of primordial savagery," (p. 107) and against the metaphysical, considering it also a relic of an earlier stage of civilization where religion played a larger role.

45. Clayton Koelb, "'In der Strafkolonie': Kafka and the Scene of Reading," in *German Quarterly* Vol. 55, No. 4 (November 1982), pp. 513-514. For a similar reading of the apparatus as a writing machine, see Arnold Weinstein, "Kafka's Writing Machine: Metamorphosis in the Penal Colony," in Ruth V. Gross, ed., *Critical Essays on Franz Kafka* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990), p. 124. This essay was originally published in *Studies in Twentieth Century Literature,* Vol. 7, No. 1 (Fall 1982).

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authority, and all justice is an alibi for power and the use of brute force.[46]

Likewise, Deleuze and Guattari argue that "where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone. Justice is desire and not law."[47] Arguing against the separation of a transcendent law from an immanent reality, they excise law from justice, leaving only "the real, immanent problems of desire and of power — the real problem of justice."[48] In their critique of the separation of meaning into a transcendent law and immanent reality, they do not try to reintegrate the two but rather make the separation permanent by discarding transcendence in order to end up with the immanence of desire which replaces both law and justice. Basing their interpretation of "In the Penal Colony" on their reading of *The Trial*, they do not differentiate between the justice presented in these two works and understand justice in both texts as another word for the power of bureaucratic systems which permeate reality through a continuous machinery of desire.[49]

Because they understand the forces of bureaucratization as unstoppable and all-encompassing, Deleuze and Guattari are forced into the extreme position of denying the very possibility either of law or any social alternative to these forces. Their only alternative is a "schizo-desire" which flees all formulations and all forms in order "to find a world of pure intensities where all forms come undone, as do all the significations, signifiers, signifieds, to the benefit of an unformed matter of deterritorialized flux, of non-signifying signs."[50] By reducing the experience of desire and, by extension, pain into pure intensity rather than the expression of a certain constellation of forces, this interpretation presents psychological regression as a solution to bureaucratization. As a result, their description of Kafka's writing distorts it into something which more closely resembles the aesthetics of pure intensity and the machine-man of Ernst Jünger than the dynamics of law and desire developed in Kafka's texts.[51] The equation of justice with desire

46. *Ibid.*, pp. 517-519. For another interpretation of the apparatus as an instrument of power without justification, see Richard Jayne, "Kafka's *In der Strafkolonie* and the Aporias of Textual Interpretation," in *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* Vol. 66, No. 1 (March 1992), p. 110.

47. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 49.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

51. For an excellent description of the machine-man in Jünger's prose and a comparison with Kafka, see Andreas Huyssen, "Fortifying the Heart — Totally: Ernst Jünger's Armored Texts" in *New German Critique* 59 (Spring/Summer 1993), pp. 3-24.

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is a rejection of the idea of law as connected with pain and, as such, a narcissistic denial of the existence of the necessities which limit desire. Against this reading of justice as a continuum of desire, "In the Penal Colony" presents an alternative to the bureaucratic machinery which justice has become in *The Trial*. In this alternative, the law is not unreachable and unknowable but rather conforms to the limits on desire imposed by external necessities and mediated through the community.[52] The function of the apparatus is to mediate law with experience.[53]

The Spirit of the Law

As gestures the two executions are opposed to each other in the same way that the anarchistic gesture of Eastern Judaism is opposed to the alienated gesture of Western Judaism. The first execution, described from the officer's local perspective, does not take place in actuality but only as a desired possibility. The second execution, conducted from the perspective of the voyager's universalist liberal culture, is carried out on the officer as

52. Deleuze and Guattari insist on the parallel between the apparatus in "In the Penal Colony" and the court system of *The Trial* in which both are seen as machines. The apparatus' obvious modern technical complexity leads them to call it a "too transcendental, too isolated and reified, and too abstract machine." Deleuze and Guattari, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40. See also Norris *op. cit.*, pp. 175-176. Yet the origins of the apparatus in a technological age say nothing about its practical relation to the system of morals of which it is a part. As Nietzsche notes: "The origin of the existence of a thing and its final utility, its practical application and incorporation in a system of ends, are *toto coelo* opposed to each other — everything, anything, which exists and which prevails anywhere, will always be put to new purposes by a force superior to itself, will be commandeered afresh, will be turned and transformed to new uses." Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic*, tr. Horace B. Samuel (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1964), p. 89. The origin of the procedure of punishment is separate from the purpose to which this procedure is later put. Thus the apparatus' origin in a technical age says nothing about the mythic use it serves. For a discussion of the importance of *The Genealogy of Morals* for Kafka, see Patrick Brigadier, *Kafka and Nietzsche* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), pp. 41-46; and Norris, *op. cit.*, pp. 171-174.

53. In addition to denying the validity of the supernatural and of law, linguistic readings of the apparatus criticize the relation between writing and experience, mistakenly attributing to the apparatus an understanding of law based on writing. For Corngold, the function of "In the Penal Colony" is to discredit the connection between writing and experience, and he condemns the apparatus because it writes the judgment using the experience of pain. Stanley Corngold, *Franz Kafka: The Necessity of Form* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 245-247. Corngold's conclusions about the incompatibility of writing and experience are in fact an apt criticism of the voyager's discursive justice, but not of justice based on the aesthetic experience of the apparatus. But because Corngold equates law with writing, he overlooks the difference between the justice of the voyager and the justice of the apparatus. He extends the idea of an alienation of writing from experience to the conclusion that law itself must also always be alienated from experience as well.

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a result of the voyager's judgment. The voyager's condemnation of the apparatus leads to the execution of the officer, but since this execution is not ordered by the officer but by the voyager, it does not proceed according to the justice of the former but of the latter.[54] While the officer considers law a result of an aesthetic event which links it to individual experience, the voyager considers law a written code imposed by a legislative apparatus.

Though Koelb, Deleuze and Guattari present an effective critique of the voyager's understanding of law, which reduces it to the written word, their failure to distinguish the two systems of justice leads them to direct their critique against the apparatus rather than the voyager. Unable to appreciate the apparatus' peculiar creation of law through aesthetic experience, they condemn the apparatus' system of justice on the basis of a critique of the sign which actually applies to the voyager's law. To avoid this error, it is necessary to distinguish carefully a discursive law from an aesthetically based law in order to recognize that the connection between law and individual experience is the crucial issue for all systems of justice.

An analysis of the text of the law provides an initial understanding of the inability of the text alone to transmit the law to the community. The old Commandant's first commandment, "Honour thy superiors" (131), emphasizes the sacred status of authority and refers to law as a necessity. Yet, although subordinates are not to question the authority of a superior, this authority is also subject to law. The old Commandant's second commandment, "Be just" (148), governs the actions of superiors and also subjects them to the law. Though these two commandments construct a complete system of law based on individual responsibility in which there is one law for subordinates and another for superiors, the laws are also so general that their realization depends on the ability of each member to interpret the two constraints of honor and justice. As a result, the individual's interpretation of the spirit of the law is much more important than a faithful reconstruction of the actual text. Moreover, this individual understanding through actions of the spirit of the law is the source from which a written law ultimately gains its validity and legitimacy.[55]

The relative lack of importance of the text is reflected in the officer's

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54. In one of the alternate versions of the end of the story, the officer, speaking in the imagination of the voyager, explicitly states that the voyager ordered his execution: "'No,' said the officer, 'an error on your part, I have been executed, as you have commanded'." See Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher 1910-1923* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1973), p. 327 (August 6, 1917).

55. Binding also notes this primacy of just actions over written laws for the development of justice. Binding, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

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description of the functioning of the apparatus. The transfiguration of the condemned is the climax. Yet this transfiguration does not result from the condemned man's successful decipherment of the judgment at the twelfth hour, the meeting of text and reader. The texts the apparatus inscribes are in fact indecipherable, and when the voyager looks at the text, "all he could see was a labyrinth of lines crossing and recrossing each other."(135). The indecipherability of the text leads to the conclusion that the intellectual cognition of the law is subordinate to the spiritual experience. The "arabesques" which make up the text of the law recall Kafka's description of Eastern Jewish prayers: "The words are not really, or chiefly, sung, but behind them arabesque-like melodies are heard that spin out of the words as fine as hairs."[56] Rather than the intellectual decipherment of the text, the goal of the process is the spiritual experience of transfiguration occurring in the sixth hour, when the condemned man realizes that his pain is structured as a text.[57]

The two forces determining the experience of transfiguration are desire and necessity. Desire is perceived as bodily desires such as hunger, necessity is felt as pain. The execution of justice corresponds to the consciousness of the meeting of these two forces. Thus, at the moment of transfiguration, the condemned man loses interest in his bodily desires, no longer finding pleasure in food, and realizes that material concerns such as pleasure and pain are less important than the spiritual issue of the pattern of his pain. "Not until the sixth hour does the man lose his pleasure in eating. At that point I usually kneel down here and observe this phenomenon.

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56. Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 59 (October 1, 1911).

57. Anderson also interprets the apparatus as the mediator of an aesthetic experience by focussing on "the embellishments," but without noting the relation to Eastern Jewish prayer. Anderson, "The Ornaments of Writing: 'In the Penal Colony'" in *Kafka's Clothes: Ornament and Aestheticism in the Habsburg "Fin de Siècle"* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), pp. 173-193. See also Koelb, *op. cit.*, p. 511 and Weinstein, *op. cit.*, p. 121. Instead, he reduces the "aesthetic context of the judgment" to "the embellishments" (Anderson, *op. cit.*, p. 175) covering the body of the condemned at the end of the execution process and at no point takes the officer's descriptions of the actual execution process at face value. Instead of focussing on the execution as an aesthetic event at the foundation of law, Anderson discusses how criminologists such as Cesare Lombroso and Hanns Gross made an "equation between tatoos and criminal types." (*Op. cit.*, p. 179) Though he points out that Hanns Cross was one of Kafka's teachers during law school, he argues that Kafka was opposed to Gross' views. (*Op. cit.*, p. 152). Yet he uses this argument not to arrive at Kafka's vision of law but to move the discussion of "In the Penal Colony" away from legal questions and toward aesthetic ones. Going on to read the apparatus' execution process as an allegorical depiction of "Kafka's own writing 'machine'" (*op. cit.*, p. 188), he does not pursue the issue of how law and aesthetic experience are intimately connected in the executions the officer describes.

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The man rarely swallows the last morsel; he simply rolls it round in his mouth and spits it into the pit. I have to duck then, or he would spit it in my face. But how still the man grows at the sixth hour! Enlightenment dawns on the dullest. It begins around the eyes. From there it spreads out. A spectacle that might tempt one to lay oneself down under the harrow beside him. Nothing further happens, the man simply begins to decipher the script, he purses his lips as if he were listening"(136-7). In order to be able to read his experience, the condemned man must forget his pain as pure intensity in order to concentrate on it as a pattern. After this crucial moment, pain is no longer simply a bodily experience like desire; it becomes a spiritual experience in which the pattern of the pain can be read in order to reveal the law which has been broken. The structure of this pain, not the pure intensity, yields the verdict. The condemned man feels intensely the physical, yet goes beyond the physical as an isolated and arbitrary event in order to understand it as part of a structure of experience which is the basis for law. This moment in which the condemned man transcends the physical is the moment of transfiguration and already contains the essence of law.

This mythic construction of law and community must be strictly differentiated from "the perspective of today's Western culture" in which, as Hugo Bergmann continues, "God and the world are given once and for all and the world and the people in it are separate from God."[58] This Western concept of religion presents it as a gesture which has been alienated from its source. As opposed to the alienated gesture, Bergmann attempts to recover in Judaism a primitivist notion of myth which can reinvigorate the gesture and make it into an expression of human forces: "The Jewish understanding also separates God and the world, but it connects the fate of the world and the fate of God with each other in such a way that the world is not simply dependent upon God, but — and this is of central importance for our considerations — the fate of God depends upon the world. We will be able to best characterize the opposition between the contemporary view and the Jewish one by noting that the relation between God and world in the European view is static while in the Jewish view it is dynamic. According to the former view, God *is* and *is* the only God and *is* holy etc. The Jewish view considers God from the standpoint of the human, as the goal and task of

58. Bergmann, "Die Heiligung des Namens" in *Vom Judentum*, *op. cit.*, p. 33, my translation.

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human life."[59] Like Kafka's differentiation between an alienated gesture based on fear of the Yiddish word and a dynamic gesture which puts the individual in touch with forces inside himself leading to both fear and self-confidence, Bergmann presents, in opposition to a civilized hypostasis of myth, a primitivist notion of myth as a dynamic construction grounded within the human. This differentiation lies at the basis of the conflict between the officer's and the voyager's conception of the apparatus.[60]

The correlation between the officer's description of transfiguration and Bergmann's view of a dynamic myth becomes clear when one considers Bergmann's own description of the moment of transcendence of the physical as the human act which creates the sacred: "God is the entity which receives a determination to action from out of itself. The life which confirms God is therefore one which pulls itself out of the tangle of conditions, cares and compromises, the unconditioned life. The consecration of the name of God thus becomes the imperative of a heroic life. For the Jew, the deepest proof of the reality of the transcendent (*des Übersinnlichen*) was the sacrifice of sensual being, the death of the witness, the martyr."[61] Like the experience of the condemned man in the apparatus, the

59. Bergmann, "Die Heiligung des Namens" in *Vom Judentum*, *op. cit.*, p. 33, my translation. Kafka's close relation to Bergmann's ideas is demonstrated by the following passage from Kafka's diaries in which Kafka convinces Bergmann that God does not precede the world: "So I remember that when I was at the Gymnasium I often — even if not very thoroughly, I probably tired easily even then — argued the existence of God with Bergmann in a talmudic style either my own or imitated from him. At the time I liked to begin with a theme I had found in a Christian magazine (I believe it was *Die Christliche Welt*) in which a watch and the world and the watchmaker and God were compared to one another, and the existence of the watchmaker was supposed to prove that of God. In my opinion I was able to refute this very well as far as Bergmann was concerned, even though this refutation was not firmly grounded in me and I had to piece it together for myself like a jigsaw puzzle before using it. Such a refutation once took place while we were walking around the Rathaus tower. I remember this clearly because once, years ago, we reminded each other of it." Kafka, *Diaries*, *op. cit.*, p. 159 (December 31, 1911). Kafka's argument that God does not make the world like the watchmaker makes the watch is the preparatory argument for Bergmann's view that God is as dependent on the world as the world is dependent on God. Kafka's continued engagement with and sympathy for Bergmann's ideas is demonstrated two years later: "Lecture by Bergmann 'Moses and the Present.' Pure impression. How this person has raised himself up, he has really a firm grip somewhere up above. And as a boy one could just blow him away, in everything, but perhaps not in everything and it was only my lack of understanding which thought so." Kafka, *Tagebücher*, *op. cit.*, p. 616 (December 17, 1913).

60. In proposing an opposition between two different conceptions of myth, I diverge from Margot Norris' reading in which she argues, following Deleuze and Guattari, that "Kafka restores physical, 'animal' pain to its real and incontestable 'truth' by de-moralizing, demythifying, and de-signifying it." Margot Norris, "Sadism and Masochism in 'In the Penal Colony' and 'A Hunger Artist'" in *Reading Kafka*, *op. cit.*, p. 181. Instead of demythification, Kafka presents a primitivist as opposed to a civilized interpretation of myth.

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rejection of the sensual world and the sacrifice of the physical self is the precondition for the construction of transcendence. Kafka's own interest in martyrdom is documented, on the one hand, by his fascination, communicated in two letters to Felice Bauer, with the news of the beatification of 22 Ugandan martyrs,[62] and on the other, by the enthusiasm for sacrifice he communicates in another letter to Felice: "The *Memoirs* are meant neither to improve nor influence your way of thinking; that was not my intention. But this life really is worth sharing. How it longs to sacrifice itself, and does! A veritable suicide and a resurrection while still alive. And what is the sacrifice for? How many readers would be able to recognize a success that, taken out of the context of the book, could stand on its own legs? I am glad you are reading it."[63] Though according to Brod's notes the mention of the Memoirs probably refers to Lily Braunn's *Memoiren einer Sozialistin*, the element of sacrifice is also prominent in Malwida von Meysenbug's *Memoiren einer Idealistin*, in which Meysenbug presents an anarchist conception of religion similar to Bergmann's. Thus her description of her visits to comfort a young boy dying of gangrene provides a model for the transfiguration of the prisoner in the

61. Bergmann, in *Vom Judentum*, *op. cit.*, p. 42, my translation.

62. "For a long time now I have planned, and only my indolence has prevented me repeatedly from carrying it through, to cut out and collect from various papers news items that astonisched me for some reason, that affected me, that seemed important to me personally for a long time to come; at a glance, they were usually quite insignificant, for instance just recently 'The beatification of 22 Christian Negro youths in Uganda' — (which I have just come across and am enclosing). I find something of the kind in the papers nearly every other day. News which seems to be meant only for me, but I haven't got the patience to start the collection for myself, let alone keep it up." Kafka, *Letter to Felice Bauer*, November 24, 1912, in *Letters to Felice*, ed. Erich Heller and Jürgen Born, tr. James Stern and Elisabeth Duckworth (Schocken Books: New York, 1973), pp. 61, 171. The importance of this clipping for Kafka is underlined by the fact that he refers to it in another letter to Felice two months later on January 24/25, 1913: "Surely you couldn't have lost the clipping about the beatification of the 22 Negro youths from Uganda?" Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, *op. cit.*, p. 171. The text of the article from the *Prager Tagblatt* of September 25, 1912, reads as follows: "A decree issued on August 13 by the Congregation of Rites announces the opening of proceedings for the beatification of the so-called 'Ugandan Martyrs' — 22 Christian Negro youths who, 26 years ago, were the first to be martyred for the faith and suffered death at the stake. It was reported from the central office of the St. Peter Claver Sodality in Rome that the cardinals who had this matter under consideration had been moved to tears by the heroism of these young martyrs. The news of the opening of proceedings for the beatification was received by all Negroes, and in particular by those from North Victoria Nyanza, the home of the martyrs, with great rejoicing which they expressed by dancing and much leaping about." Reprinted in Kafka, *Letters to Felice*, *op. cit.*, p. 579.

63. Kafka, *Letters to Felice (*Berlin, May 6, 1915*)*, *op. cit.*, p. 454.

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apparatus: "I went regularly to read to him from the Bible and connected this reading with considerations which were appropriate for his age and his understanding but which were anything but orthodox. I did not describe his suffering as something sent for his salvation; did not say to him that the crucifixion of a mediator had freed him from sins which his innocent heart did not know. Rather, I attempted to make clear to him the power and majesty of the spirit which, with the vision of eternal truth, can make one forget the most horrible suffering. Myself carried away by my task, I attempted to raise him to a state of ecstasy which could make his horrible death easier for him. I can still see in my memory the face of the poor child, a transfigured smile animating his pale lips and his large dark eyes glowing with an otherworldly light."[64] The similarity between the "transfigured smile" of the boy and "the transfigured look on the tortured face" (141) of the condemned man in the apparatus is unmistakable, not only in that both the boy and the prisoner experience an ecstasy in their pain and death but also in that the significance of their experience goes beyond their individual fates and profoundly affects their spectators as well, who are themselves "carried away."

These examples from Kafka's readings demonstrate the connection between the experience of the condemned man in the apparatus with the idea that sacrifice provides the foundation for an anarchist/primitivist conception of the world and culture. But Kafka also links the idea of sacrifice to law and punishment, in this case relying on Nietzsche's *The Genealogy of Morals*. For both Kafka and Nietzsche, the transcendence of the physical is not an abandonment of the realm of experience but rather an intense concentration on the hidden structures of this realm. To realize that there is a decipherable pattern in pain is to realize that experience follows certain structures which are not arbitrary. Certain actions lead to a specific and limited range of consequences; the relation between action and consequence can be seen as the basis of law. Because law is defined through the experience of pain, it must be reconstructed constantly, only becoming evident in the punishment which results from a transgression. Every instance of punishment of an individual is simultaneously a definition of the law, of the necessities which constrain the desires and freedom of the community.The connection between law and the necessities which affect the entire community is expressed in the idea of the doubtlessness of guilt: "Guilt is always beyond question. Other courts cannot follow this principle since they are composed of more than

64. Meysenbug, *Memoiren einer Idealistin*, *op. cit.*, p. 100, my translation.

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one member, and furthermore they have higher courts above them" (132). The doubtlessness of guilt can only be applied within a small community in which external necessities are directly felt by all and there are no mediating agencies which take over the decision-making process. No one can escape guilt. All are subject to the necessity of pain.[65]

The first commandment of the old Commandant, "Honour thy superiors," refers to the necessity of pain. In honoring authority and superiors, the community collectively recognizes that pain is a result of external exigencies. The failure to honor superiors is a failure to recognize these external limitations on the desires of the community and would lead to actions threatening the community's survival. Seen in this way, the punishment of the condemned is a collective reenactment, a mimesis, of the punishment which threatens the entire group. If the transgression of an individual is not punished by the community and the law transgressed is based on external necessities which affect the group, then the community as a whole will eventually experience the punishment which the outside world will inflict. The punishment of the transgressor is not a simple execution but a sacrifice which the community must make in order to preserve itself.[66]

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65. There is a close correlation between this image of punishment and Niezsche's concept. Nietzsche writes that the effect of punishment was not to make people "better," nor to create a feeling of guilt or a bad conscience in its victims. (Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-99) Rather than as an atonement for guilt, Nietzsche describes punishment as "an irresponsible piece of fate" which strikes the criminal just as a natural catastrophe strikes without warning or reason. (Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 97) The reaction of the criminal to punishment is: "'here is something which went wrong contrary to my anticipation' not: 'I ought not to have done this.'" (Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 98) Consequently, the practical effect of punishment on the community is its primary justification. Punishment is not imposed in order to create goodness or cure the criminal, but to effect a training of memory and the will whose goal is "the increase of fear, the sharpening of the sense of cunning, the mastery of the desires." (Nietzsche, *op. cit.*, p. 99) For Nietzsche, punishment serves to connect individual experience to external necessities.

66. This principle of community survival lies at the basis of his theory of norms. Summing up Binding's theory, Bar writes that the state, in deciding punishment, must determine "whether the evil resulting from no punishment is greater for the state than the evil of punishment; for punishment is also an evil, and not just for those directly affected." Carl Ludwig von Bar, *Geschichte des deutschen Strafrechts und der Strafrechtstheorien*, 1. (einziger) Band des Handbuchs des deutschen Strafrechts, Neudruck der Ausgabe Berlin 1882 mit Vorbemerkungen von Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1974), p. 308. According to Binding: "both the threat of punishment and the execution exist primarily to influence the entire community bound by the law and they can only maintain this influence to the extent that they create an impression on both the criminal and the collective, if possible, or only on the collective, if this double effect is not possible. For this latter effect is infinitely more significant and beneficial!" Binding, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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The commandment, "Be just," defines the responsibilities of authority. The justice of a particular law depends on the extent to which the punishment inflicted on the individual transgressor corresponds to the punishment which would be inflicted by external necessities on the group as a whole if the community were to allow the individual transgressor to go free. The execution process remains legitimate to the extent that the punishment it exacts corresponds directly to the pain which threatens the community as a whole. The task of making this determination in the colony rests not only with the officer but with all those in positions of authority. Like the officer, they must take responsibility for their decisions. If these decisions turn out to be unjust, then the superiors are subject to condemnation as well, as demonstrated by the fate of the officer.

The legitimation of authority occurs collectively in the execution, which must repeat the experience of each individual in order to retain its legitimacy. Consequently, "[s]o as to enable anyone to scrutinize the carrying out of the sentence, the harrow is made of glass. Getting the needles mounted in the glass presented certain technical problems, but after numerous experiments we managed it. No effort was spared, you understand. And now anyone can observe through the glass how the inscription on the body takes place" (134). Because the justice of an authority is carried out as a comparison of the judgment with the experience of the community, the inscription of the judgment must be accessible to everyone.[67] To the extent that the aesthetic experience is a repetition of the individual experience of each member of the community, the law is affirmed. The sentencing of the condemned does not occur at the whim of a supreme and arbitrary authority; it is legitimated by the entire valley of spectators. The community experiences justice through an act of collective sacrifice, and the guilt of the executioner, thanks to the apparatus, is shared by all.

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67. Thus Bar describes the communal judgment of actions as essential for the maintenance of morals within the community. Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 313. Similarly, Bergmann argues that the sacrifice of the material is the basis for moral actions: the sacred acts which create the divine. "For God is the goal of human striving. In every action in which we transform ourselves from a thing to an ego, from a conditioned creation to a free entity, in every moral action, we act like God, we realize the divine." Bergmann, *op. cit.*, p. 41, my translation.

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Law as Collective Experience

Though they were initially created by the old Commandant, the commandments of the law must be reenacted continually as a collective aesthetic experience for them to be able to lead to the constitution of the colony as a distinct entity. The survival of the community as an integral totality is linked inextricably to its construction of justice through this experience. Thus the authority of the old Commandant is mediated through the community's participation in the execution.[68]

The officer describes this participation as a collective experience in which the inhabitants of the colony gather to witness the executions. "The day before the performance the entire valley was already crammed with people; everyone came along just to watch it. . . " (140). The purpose of the gatherings is to experience justice as something irreducible to a set of written laws. The execution of the law corresponds to an intangible spiritual experience. As the condemned died, "many even ceased to watch and lay with their eyes closed in the sand; all of them knew: Now justice is taking its course" (140). Rather than being defined once and for all according to universal principles, justice appears as a collective experience. It is something which "takes its course" and is connected intimately with the moment of transfiguration experienced by the tortured prisoner in the sixth hour: "Yes, and then came the sixth hour! It was impossible to grant every request to watch from close up. The Commandant in his wisdom decreed that the children should be given priority; of course I myself, by virtue of my office, could always be close at hand; often I would be squatting there with a small child in either arm. How we all drank in the transfigured look on the tortured face, how we bathed our cheeks in the glow of this justice, finally achieved and soon fading! O comrade, what times those were!" (140-1). The importance of this aesthetic experience for the constitution and maintenance of the community is underlined by the need to educate children into the experience of transfiguration. The grounding of justice in a shared aesthetic-religious experience constitutes the "peculiarity" not only of the apparatus but also of the community which has chosen the apparatus as a

68. Foucault shows that the success of executions in the 17th and 18th centuries in France depended upon the support of the crowd. "In the ceremonies of the public execution, the main character was the people, whose real and immediate presence was required for the performance." Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1979), p. 57.

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basis for justice. Bar describes the religious element of punishment as grounded both in sacrifice and in the community's survival. On the one hand, the death penalty originates out of a religious sacrifice;[69] on the other, the original function of the religious sacrifice was to preserve the community.[70]

Similarly, the sacred texts of the apparatus — the old Commandant's designs for the laws to be inscribed on the condemned — are not the final works of art. Rather, the apparatus itself and the entire penal colony constructed by the execution are the works of art created by the aesthetic transfiguration. The inventor of the apparatus and the colony is the former Commandant: "'This apparatus,' he [the officer] said, taking hold of a connecting-rod and leaning on it, 'is an invention of our former Commandant . . . Well, I'm not exaggerating when I say that the organization of the whole penal colony is his work" (128). The status of the apparatus as an invention reflects its entwinement with the status of the entire colony as a work of art.

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69. "The religious element expresses itself very emphatically. Even the word *supplicium* — signifying punishment and especially the death penalty — is of sacred origin. It originally signified the sacrifice of atonement, a sacrifice combined with a plea for mercy, and derives from *sub* and *placare*, to placate, and, when a crime has been committed, special sacrifices of atonement are not seldom made in order to calm the anger of the gods. *Sacer* signifies the criminal who has been banished out of the association of gods and men and declared 'free as a a bird,' so that anyone who kills him/her accomplishes a deed which is pleasing to the gods." (Bar, *op. cit.*, pp. 5-6)

70. "The actions upon which the condition of *sacer* for the guilty is based are much more essentially connected with the interest of the family and the community." Bar, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7. On this, Foucault writes: "An offence, according to the law of the classical age, quite apart from the damage it may produce, apart even from the rule that it breaks, offends the rectitude of those who abide by the law. . . Besides its immediate victim, the crime attacks the sovereign: it attacks him personally, since the law represents the will of the sovereign; it attacks him physically, since the force of the law is the force of the prince." Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 47. As opposed to Bar and Binding, Foucault sees the crime as an offence against the prince rather than against the community. This replacement of the prince for the community may have to do with the specific history of state centralization in France creating a distance between the community and the law. Yet, Foucault's replacement turns law into an issue, not of justice, but of power and terror: "Yet, in fact, what had hitherto maintained this practice of torture was not an economy of example. . . , but a policy of terror: to make everyone aware, through the body of the criminal, of the unrestrained presence of the sovereign. The public execution did not re-establish justice; it reactivated power." Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 49. Like Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault equates justice with arbitrary power and does not consider the possibility that the laws of the sovereign might be a result of external necessities which impose unavoidable restrictions on the entire community. In contrast, Kafka attempts to distinguish between these two manifestations of law.

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The Dead Letter

Because the executions are carried out collectively, the functioning of the apparatus depends on the assent of the community supporting it. But by the same token, without the legitimacy lent to the justice of the apparatus by the collectivity, the officer loses the mandate for his authority and the execution becomes an arbitrary act.[71] It is, however, at this point — when the apparatus has lost its followers — that the story begins. The collective which supported the justice of the apparatus no longer exists and, as a result, the apparatus no longer functions smoothly but rather with the grinding noise of a defective gear (136).

In the face of this lack of community support, the officer submits to the voyager's condemnation. He frees the condemned man and places himself in the apparatus. "Be just" is to be inscribed on his body (148). But because the officer is being condemned by the voyager's new justice, the apparatus will no longer function according to the officer's expectations. Whereas the law of the old Commandant was accessible to and even dependent on individual experience, the new law brings with it an alienation of the individual from the authority which pronounces the judgments and a separation of judgment from execution. The process by which the officer is condemned resembles the experience of Joseph K. in *The Trial*. Instead of a direct condemnation by the entire community, the officer's condemnation by the new Commandant occurs by proxy, through the voyager and after a prolonged set of defenses which in the end are useless and are not even recognized by the voyager as having any relation to the final execution.

According to the voyager, justice is divided into two processes: the judgment and the execution. The judgment is not based on the individual experience of the condemned but on a process of debate during which the accused has an opportunity to mount a defense. Yet the terms of this defense block the connection between law and experience. The officer's defense is never considered by the voyager on its own terms because the translation of aesthetic experience into discursive formulations fails here just as Nathan Birnbaum's discursive defense of Eastern Judaism and

71. Foucault notes the dependence of the execution on community support by describing both "successful" executions (Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 58-9) and cases where the spectators prevented executions (Foucault, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-62). Whereas in Kafka's account the spectators provide a guarantee of the legitimacy of the judgment process, Foucault interprets the reaction of the spectators as either a submission to state authority or a rebellion against it.

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Kafka's own explanation of the Yiddish language fail on a gestural level to create the spiritual community they can only describe.

The first part of the story consists primarily of the officer's explanations of the apparatus to the voyager. The officer's decision to explain first the apparatus and then demonstrate it is already a concession to the rational decision-making the voyager prefers. Yet this concession has been forced upon the officer by the new Commandant and by the loss of followers for the apparatus. It is the new Commandant who invited the voyager to witness the execution and subject it to his perspective. The new Commandant has also introduced public meetings of the administrators of the colony: "Tomorrow there's to be a great meeting of all the high administrative officials at the Commandant's headquarters, with the Commandant himself presiding" (144). These meetings now draw the spectators which earlier had thronged to the executions. Just as everyone present at the executions could "observe through the glass how the inscription on the body takes place" (134), the spectators at the meetings are allowed to observe discussions of the administrators of the colony: "Of course the Commandant has succeeded in turning all such meetings into public spectacles. He has had a gallery built that is always packed with spectators" (144). The old Commandant's execution and the new Commandant's public meetings are parallel events, suggesting that the new Commandant has attempted to reproduce on the rational level what was previously experienced as a spiritual transfiguration. But whereas the apparatus' execution was a collective experience which legitimized the law, the public meetings have the character of spectacles in which the community is alienated from the proceedings.[72]

This alienation is demonstrated by the separation of languages in the penal colony. Accompanying the voyager's attempts to overcome his lack of interest in the apparatus, the condemned man attempts to follow the officer's explanations, even though they are in French, a language which

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72. Foucault describes the increasing distance of the spectators from the executions in the 18th century as an increasing alienation which, though justified by "feelings of humanity for the condemned," separated justice from community legitimation. Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 65. Carl Schmitt describes this transformation in law as a diminishment of the role of jurisprudence in the face of a 19th and 20th century rise of codes of law passed by legislators. See Carl Schmitt, "The Plight of European Jurisprudence," trans. by G. L. Ulmen, *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), pp. 35-70. For a discussion of sources of law, see Friedrich Carl von Savigny, *System des heutigen Römischen Rechts* (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1840), Vol. I, Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 13ff. Cited by Schmitt, p. 57. See also Friedrich Carl von Savigny, *Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft* (Heidelberg, 1840; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), pp. 8-15.

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the condemned soldier does not understand. The division between the voyager who understands but is initially uninterested and attempts to remain disinterested later on, and the condemned man who does not understand French, a bureaucratic and international language, but who has a deep interest in comprehension exemplifies the division on the level of language which seems to have taken place on the island between the administrators and the harbor workers and soldiers. Whereas the earlier functioning of the apparatus united all groups in a collective experience and the condemned man's attempts at reading his pain were a reading of his own experience, the introduction of public meetings (certainly in French) along with the increased commerce with the rest of the world brought on by the new harbor works (144) and the welcoming of the voyager have created a division between those who have mastered the French language of commerce and exchange and those who only speak the language of the indigenous people. This division insures that the public meetings, though modeled on the ecstatic communal experience enabled by the apparatus, will remain a spectacle which maintains a distinction between active and passive participants in the colony's new system of law.[73]

The inability of rational discourse to integrate collective experience is demonstrated by how the officer is condemned by the voyager. If the condemned soldier has difficulty understanding the officer's explanations, the officer has similar problems reading the voyager's judgment. "The officer was constantly looking sideways at the voyager, as if trying to read from his face how the execution, which he had by now at least superficially explained, was impressing him" (137). Here already slipping into the same position as the uncomprehending condemned man, the officer awaits the judgment of the voyager without any understanding that he is condemned from the beginning. Echoing the officer's words, "guilt is always beyond question from the beginning," the narrator repeats at a later point: "The answer that he must give had been clear to the voyager from the very beginning" (146). As the condemnation of the officer demonstrates, the rational rendering of the officer's justice obscures rather than reveals the specific logic of his system. The voyager's condemnation ignores the validity of the collective experience of justice which is the center of the execution process, and the voyager's judgment ends

73. As Schmitt points out, the separation of legality from legitimacy in Germany was a consequence of the move to a justice based on a code of laws passed by the state. The primacy of written laws led to the reduction of the power of jurists to interpret laws and to the creation of "motorized legislation," with which bureaucrats and presidents in the Weimar Republic gained dictatorial powers. Schmitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-53.

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up being as arbitrary as the justice of the machine appears to the voyager.

The voyager's liberal achievement, however, is to project successfully the arbitrariness of his own judgment onto the justice of the apparatus. This projection takes place not only in the voyager's unintended manipulation of the reader but in the voyager's appropriation of the apparatus. The voyager's justice makes use of the machine as did the officer's justice. The fact of the voyager's admiration for the technical complexity of the machine attests to his affinity with the machine, but solely as a technical instrument of execution, not as a mediator between law and experience. The execution which the apparatus carries out does not follow the officer's, but the voyager's justice. Since this justice does not recognize the validity of the now delegitimized transfiguration, the apparatus operates smoothly according to the condemnation expressed by the voyager, for whom the pattern of the inscription is no longer important and is in fact senseless. The gears that controlled the patterning of the inscription are spit out of the "designer" one after another, and the apparatus proceeds to execute the officer directly and immediately: "The harrow was not writing, it was just stabbing, and the bed was not rolling the body over but just heaving it up quivering into the needles. The voyager wanted to intervene, if possible to bring the whole thing to a standstill, for this was no torture such as the officer had wished to achieve, this was just plain murder" (151). When he is executed, the officer does not experience transfiguration. He is simply impaled. The separation of the judgment from the execution has turned the apparatus into a machinery of death, only to be judged, as the voyager had done at the beginning of the story, in terms of technical efficiency.

At this point the voyager's reduction of law to an empty letter and of sacrifice to a machinery of death resembles the methods of fascism much more than the officer's justice. Whereas justice under the officer depends upon the morals within the community which lead to just actions,[74] the justice of both the voyager and of fascism depend upon a separation of the sentence from the punishment and the law from action. In this situation where justice and the letter of the law are equated, there is no place for individual interpretation of the law and thus no process whereby laws may be legitimized by the moral actions of the community. In such a situation, where punishment is

74. Bar writes: "The law can grant someone the permission to kill another. For example, it may grant the lord the permission to kill the slave. but that which dictates the execution of what is permitted is not the law, but a properly or improperly understood morality according to which we measure, whether we want to or not, all of our actions, insofar as these actions enter distinctly into our consciousness at all." Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

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separated from the community, execution becomes a purely technical process which lacks legitimation and occurs secretly rather than publicly.

The voyager's idea of justice exists without any process of collective legitimation and he does not seem to think such a foundation is necessary to maintain the set of morals connected with his concept of justice. While the officer's justice is concerned primarily with justice as a community event and as an issue which goes beyond the individual, the voyager is primarily concerned with the individual victim and does not recognize until after the fact the consequences for the community of a justice which only considers individual rights. Thus, as the voyager listens to the officer's explanations at the beginning of the story, he is distracted constantly by the presence of the prisoner. "The voyager would have said no more, but he became aware of the condemned man's gaze turned upon him; it seemed to be asking if he could approve the procedure described" (132). Though the prisoner does not know what is happening, the voyager interprets the prisoner's gestures as mute cries for help. "When the needle-points touched him a shudder ran over his skin; while the soldier was busy with his right hand, he stretched out his left hand in some unknown direction; but it was towards the spot where the voyager was standing" (137). In acting against the apparatus, the voyager takes the side of the individual prisoner against the community's system of justice.

But with the emancipation of the prisoner, the law broken by the prisoner, "Honour thy superiors," is annulled implicitly. In condemning the apparatus, the voyager also condemns the whole system of authority on which the community in the penal colony is based. As a result, after he is freed the prisoner does not listen to any of the orders the voyager gives. When he orders the soldier and the prisoner to leave the scene, "[t]he voyager saw that giving orders was useless" (150). Again, when the voyager orders the soldier and the prisoner to help him remove the corpse of the officer from the needles of the apparatus, "the other two could not make up their minds; the condemned man actually turned away; the voyager had to go over to them and compel them to take up their place at the officer's head" (152). The sparing of an individual in this case condemns the community to disintegration, as the voyager only belatedly recognizes.[75] After

75. For Bar, the subordination of the individual to the community's demands is one of the fundamental sources of penal law: "The origin of penal law refers to a double root: to the principle of revenge for an injury of justice and to the principle of the subordination of the individual to a higher authority, whether it be the family or the head of the clan or the community or the state itself, an authority which attempts to maintain a particular order for the purpose of pursuing more or less determinate and conscious goals." Bar, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

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condemning the officer for his use of the apparatus to compel the condemned soldier to "obey his superiors" in the colony, the voyager finds himself using direct violence against the condemned soldier for the purpose of enforcing his own orders. The voyager has replaced law with brute force.

In the final section of the story, the voyager is faced with the further consequences of his actions. He is drawn to the teahouse where, recognizing the spiritual significance of the tradition he has helped to overthrow, "he felt the power of earlier times" (152). Though his judgment against the officer has allied him with the soldier and the prisoner, he is taken aback by this relation. Unlike the workers in the teahouse, he will not laugh at the grave of the old Commandant. In the end, in contrast to the officer's willingness to answer for his beliefs and be executed according to the voyager's condemnation, the voyager refuses to take responsibility for his support of the prisoner against the officer, fleeing the island and warding off the soldier's and the prisoner's attempts to join him (123).

The colony's prospects are bleak. The former Commandant no longer has the followers to support and justify his form of justice, and the officer betrays the ideal of justice as a collective experience by saying: "In any case, the machine still operates and it is effective on its own. It is effective even if it stands all alone in this valley. And the corpse still falls at the last with the same unfathomable smoothness into the pit, even if there are not, as there used to be, hundreds gathered like flies around it" (141). The voyager is part of the universal culture which, having no right to impose its values (as the voyager himself is the first to admit), takes control of the colony through the new harbor and destroys the indigenous culture, leaving only the harbor workers, "poor, humiliated folk" (153). The intact, vibrant community has disintegrated. The nominally humanitarian but administratively based state that has replaced it creates a stratification between administrators and masses which destroys community structures able to legitimate laws. The only hope for a future community is the prophecy of the resurrection and the return of the old Commandant.[76]

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76. Binding makes a similar prophecy in his attack on new forms of punishment based on "pity": "As for the so-called 'restorative punishment' (*Sicherungsstrafe*), according to the latest methods this punishment, which is not one and only mistakenly carries its name, is no longer supported by a deep feeling of disapproval for injustice, by a consciousness of its necessity and justice, but is only supposed to be a measure taken out of pity for the guiltless criminal. Consequently, it is deprived of all seriousness. I would hazard my own prophecy against prophecy: this 'punishment' will declare the bankruptcy which has been falsely attributed to the form of punishment historically passed down to us." Binding, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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Yet, this prophecy rings hollow at the end of the story. The forces of commerce, rationality and bureaucratization present an overwhelming power which eradicates all forms of peculiarity.

The Future of the Primitive

"In the Penal Colony" presents the tragedy of primitive culture.The officer is the hero. His death is a sacrifice which results from the hopelessness of his situation. Yet this lack of alternatives was dictated by Kafka's historical situation in which the Western liberal attack on tradition had already eroded the community structures which could support an organic culture.

The structure of the apparatus' system of justice does offer a way out to the extent that the experience of transfiguration is aesthetic; it must constantly be reinvented in order to survive. If the fragility of this process of invention makes communities vulnerable to the predations of a universalist rationalization, the continuation of this process, even within healthy communities, points toward the potential for regeneration of communities given the opportunity to develop on their own.

The formal gestural connection between experience and law outlined in the penal colony demonstrates not just the vulnerability but also the renewability of a community's peculiarity. The condition for this renewal is an aesthetic-religious experience in which a community constitutes its specific identity as a group. The social distinctions which would otherwise separate individuals from each other become irrelevant in the face of the collective experience. This experience must be *apolitical* — power relations between individuals or factions should play no role — and *constitutive* for all other experiences, the sacred providing the parabolical template for everyday experience. This creation of patterns for experience is the essence of law, which in the end is not a text but a pattern of conduct. The law, like the apparatus in the penal colony, "grows with a people, develops with it, and finally dies away when the peculiarity of a people is lost."[77]

77. Savigny, *Vom Beruf unserer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

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The New Northern League: End of a "Grand Design"?

Bernard Poche

It seems impossible for any serious observer to hazard a forecast about Italy's political future. One can, however, inquire about what happened to the federalist theme of the Northern League, focusing on recent shifts in its ideological and strategic line. The numerous commentaries dealing with the League's last convention held February 10-12, 1995 in Milan have not emphasized sufficiently that it may be the outcome of an evolution which dates back to the end of 1993, when the League first began to participate in parliamentary debates. This participation, however, was not their objective or at least it should have been only a tactical one. A short time after the "founding" congress at Pieve Emanuele in January 1991, which launched the federation of the Lombard League with *Liga Veneta, Piemont Autonomista* (afterwards *Lega Nord Piemont*) the satellite leagues in Liguria, Emilia, Trentino, etc., Umberto Bossi and Gianfranco Miglio delivered important speeches in a meeting held in Pontida[1] (February 1991). They pointed to regional and local elections in 1995 as even more important for them than the 1992 parliamentary elections. The former would be the practical "launching pad" for the federated Northern Republic — the key element of the future Italian federal system. As for the latter, Bossi set his goal at 60 members elected in both Chambers (at that time there were only two, Bossi himself in the Senate and

1. A little town in the Bergamasque hills, Pontida is the place where in the Middle Ages the federated Lombard, Venetian, etc. cities sealed an alliance against the emperor Frederick Barbarossa (1167), whom they defeated some years later in the historical battle of Legnano (1176). Both places have been deployed by Bossi as symbols for the League.

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Giuseppe Leoni in the Chamber of Deputies) and to become the third political force in Italy (behind the Christian Democrats and the Communists). Their ultimate objective was to have Parliament become a new Constituent Assembly. In case of failure, the Northern members were to assemble and elaborate a constitution of the future federated Northern Republic (but not to plan secession).

All this leads to two basic themes: 1) The League has always been a social movement, i.e., founded on idiosyncratic elements pertaining to a particular social sub-system. This means that the identity phenomenon the League seeks to articulate has to be a specific component of the political system. Within this subsystem democracy is "direct,"[2] with internal conflicts between factions, not "formal," with alternations between political parties (as in the Anglo-Saxon model). 2) From the very beginning the League has been linked with a federalism based on identity and on the notion of membership predicated on residence in a particular location. This federalism, however, is taboo as a subject and presents a paradox. At first sight, federalism does not seem to refer to much more than a device of administrative management, not too different from decentralization or regionalization, although its correct meaning is exactly the opposite. Miglio has often pointed to its ambiguity concerning *sovereignty*: "Any political system with a unity of sovereignty is not really federal. A really federal system has a plurality of possible sovereignties; in such a system, it is uncertain at any given time what power or authorities are prevailing over the others." Similarly: "The principles of the new federalism [are based on] a contract, not on a political pact. . . . A political pact is for life and annihilates the liberty of the individual. All great political ideologies have developed in light of the basic unity of a pact, which outranks all other agreements. On the other hand, the contract is tantamount to organizing inter-individual relations. By nature it is limited in length and subject to a whole series of conditions, constraints and pre-established circumstances that allow for its dissolution. That is the spirit of the federalist structure."[3]

From the very beginning Bossi objected to the centralized management of the public good. That entailed a radical duality of sovereignty. Each level must have its own institutional structure, and the "local" one is

2. Cf. Stefano Allievi, *Le Parole della Lega (*Milan: Garzanti, 1992), pp. 11-14.

3. Gianfranco Miglio "The Traditional Federal System Based on the Necessity of Pluri-Ethnic Wholes," in *Nuovo Federalismo Europeo*, Acts of the Convention of the Northern League (Stresa, , June 25-26, 1993), pp. 14-16.

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characterized by a strong relation between jurisdictions and the identifiable social system supposedly responsible for their management (the canton, the *Land*, the state). For this very reason, it is not merely a problem of "subsidiarity," of a rational sharing of jurisdictions among various levels able to deal with them. It consists in a contract among equals, between a social macro-group (the canton, the *Land*, etc.) and the rational aggregation of an adequate number of similar groups within a federation, according to the principles of international law. The former is nearer to natural law; the latter, positive law.

Such an outlook was the basis of the League's main thesis: the "Northern Republic" as a "macro-region," not, as is frequently argued, a more or less xenophobic "anti-meridionalism." To uphold such a thesis, purely historical arguments are not enough; their strength is limited by historical transformations. The League's key point, "integral federalism," presupposes that a social system or sub-system chooses to define itself according to a cultural logic. This entails three types of conditions:

1) If a "cultural" unit is always likely to be questioned (as no longer pertinent, or not reliable, or corresponding to several more significant sub-types), it is necessary to recognize relevant similarities in the relation of the elements to their surroundings. In fact, even if parochialism (*campanilismo*) is ignored, there remains a relevant homogeneity within the Po basin (way of life, relations with neighbors in the North, ecological system, etc.). These connotations clearly separate the corresponding population from the inhabitants of Central and Southern Italy, and those of the islands.

2) From a "socio-economic" viewpoint, it is possible to discern "culturally" comparable attitudes toward modernity, productivity, factory work, etc. — all usually associated with the "Italian miracle." Some authors[4] have outlined the difference between the "first" Italy (comprising the heavily industrialized areas and the triangle Turin-Milan-Genoa), and the "third" (including primarily medium-size firms in Emilia, Venetia and Tuscany).[5] This typology, however, does not reflect the present state of affairs. It overemphasizes the importance of cooperative networks and the local economic structure of the Communist Party, overestimates similarities between the rather agricultural Tuscany and Umbria and North-Eastern

4. See Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Le Tre Italie: La Problematica Territorale dello Sviluppo Italiano* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1977).

5. The "second" Italy would correspond to the South, with the previous big agricultural estates.

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Italy, and underestimates similarities between "red" Emilia and "white" (i.e., Christian-Democrat) Venetia and Lombardy concerning the network of small firms, local banks, and family relations. In addition to large companies such as Fiat and Olivetti, this density of highly innovative and medium-size firms producing shoes, medical electronics, furniture, food stuff, etc., characterizes Northern Italy as a whole,.

3) Similarly, there is considerable support for economic liberalism, freedom from the state and, by the same token, a lot of faith in the efficiency of free enterprise as the mainspring of development. State action is mistrusted, its welfare side is considered inefficient (especially in the South), and all centralized coordination is seen as useless since the state is deemed incapable of dealing with large infrastructures and public utilities.

These attitudes tend to favor a federal design combining two classical purposes of the federal system as a form of transaction between state and society. The territorial side, sometimes referred to as "economic or regional planning," refers to the establishment of fairly important units able to set up authorities and mobilize corresponding local resources. The membership side, sometimes referred to as "cultural" or "group" identity, refers to the recognition of social structures able to develop a permanent collective consciousness allowing them to deal with the state as a collective subject.

These principles can be found in the "dual federalism" projected by the 1993 Belgian Constitutional Reform. The League's plan clearly embodied such a system. It prefigured the federation of "historical regions" into macro-regions comprising larger territorial powers. Yet, the historical regions were not abolished: a clever system of jurisdictional overlaps was elaborated as a first step in the preparatory reports for the above-mentioned Pieve Emanuele Congress, which proposed to counterbalance the state with territorial units, themselves products of the free association of culturally homogeneous sub-systems.

The whole process, however, was the result of an internal "Northern" approach to the problem. This was not just the expression of a "selfish" attitude, but the result of the superimposition of an estimated "Northern" vision over that of "traditional" political parties and ideologies. The League's strategic principles can be summarized as follows: "Our vision of Italy is suitable for Northern social groups, such as have been constituted by common historical, cultural and economic factors. The same would probably be the case for the other parts of the country, judging from the results of centralism and of 'Roman' policies for the South, but the

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decision is theirs and 'not ours.' Our purpose must not be to found a 'nth party' on the national level but to gather all the forces of Northern residents who agree with our vision of Northern Italy, in order to impose a general vision of the country in which each part can choose its own government prior to redefining the general political system on a national scale."

All the League's positions, documents, etc., conformed to this pattern, at least until 1992. But after that Bossi's movement gradually became a victim of its own success and of its indirect consequences, e.g., the well-known *Mani Pulite* operation. Along with the efforts of other political leaders, such as the President of the Republic, Francesco Cossiga, Mario Segni and Leoluca Orlando (three "unruly children" of the former Christian Democratic Party), this has resulted in a change in the rules of the political game, the weakening of the parties and subsequently their collapse.

During the first stage (1991-92), the League's success paralleled the decline of the established political parties. The latter, however, did not crumble, even after the April 1992 parliamentary elections, when the League succeeded in gaining 55 deputies and 25 senators. This generated a strange phenomenon: due to the general opposition to the proportional electoral system allegedly responsible for the country's "ungovernability," there was a movement glimmering for the "British" system. At that time the League leaders did not conceal (at least in private) that they hoped for total victory in the North, a growth of Left support in the Center, and further successes of the "clientelistic" Christian Democratic Party in the South. As a result, the country would be cut into three parts, according to rather incompatible *Weltanschauungen*. Within such a context, the best solution would have been to let each part develop its own appropriate organizational pattern. In retrospect, this forecast seems somewhat naive. Yet it was widely shared and fit with the "north-centric" concept of a possible Italian federalism. This first turning point was rather tortuous: *ad augusta per angusta*. It would not be the last time, and never with a happy outcome.

What followed was the breakdown of the political parties, the organization of systems of alliances (with rather unexpected positive results for Left alliances)[6] and finally, the political debut of Silvio Berlusconi at the end of 1993. This marks the League's second turning point with respect to its federalist strategy. It corresponds to the period between the "pre-federal" congress held in Assago (December 11-12, 1993) and the federal congress held in Bologna (February 4-6, 1994).

6. See the special issue of the *Revue Politique et Parlementaire* 96 (Nov.-Dec. 1993) on Italy, especially the articles by G. Bibes and Bernard Poche.

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During the first congress, Miglio proposed a concise but clear project for a "Provisional Federal Constitution," composed of ten articles carrying to all their logical conclusions the ideas outlined in the Pieve Emanuele congress, especially concerning the territorial division of powers and sovereignty. This project was the product of over ten years research in constitutional matters.[7] It prefigured both presidential and confederal arrangements, and proposed an "Italian Union" as a free association of three republics (North, Center and South) with the separate joining of five "autonomous regions" (Val d'Aoste, Trentin-Upper Adige, Friul-Julian Venetia, and the two islands, Sicily and Sardinia). The central government was to be composed of a Premier, directly elected by all the citizens of the Union, assisted by a "Directory" made of the presidents of the eight constituting units, able to act only by consensus in economic and financial matters. Together, the "diets" of the republics were to form the political Assembly of the Union, in charge of governmental control, apart from the "Legislative College," directly elected on the Union level, few in number (200 members) and subdivided in sections according to the various legislative tasks. This highly innovative project was well received and was passed unanimously by the delegates. It was an enormous triumph for Miglio .

But had everyone really understood what this meant? The proposals were very daring. The real issue was Italy as a nation and the very notion of the nation-state. A federation in Miglio's sense is not a nation, neither a political one (the so-called "French" version, predicated on the *contrat social*) nor an ethnic one (the so-called "German" version, presupposing a common identity). It is only a free agreement between free entities which consider themselves societies, i.e., stable compounds of social representations, values and even strategies.

Behind the League's federal design lay the assumption that the three main parts of Italy were such societies. In other words, it was necessary to persuade Italians that they really belonged to such sub-systems and that the best prospects for their future was the social management of these republics by a state providing not a unifying principle of a higher order but merely a connection with the international political system.

It seemed difficult to persuade Southerners accustomed to the welfare state that this was the better alternative precisely because, among other "perverse effects," the welfare state had brought about the loss of a sense of responsibility or initiative. The debate, however, was not limited to the

7. See Gianfranco Miglio, "Toward a Federal Italy," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 19-42; and *Una Costituzione per i Prossimi Trent'Anni* (Bari: Laterza, 1990).

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question of the *Mezzogiorno.* Even in the North, it seemed to pit people who thought that because of modernity and the resulting prosperity it was now possible to deploy Saint Simon's proposal "to leave the government of men in favor of a rational management of things" against those who saw the state as embodying fundamental values such as democracy.[8]

The latter was still held by Christian Democrat as well as Marxist elites. The League could be seen as advocating a kind of "right-wing Proudhonism" with significant "libertarian" components — something reflecting the personal background of some of its leaders. Notwithstanding its intricacy and ambiguity, until Berlusconi came on the scene this position was the only one prefiguring a project of radical modernization of the relation between state and society in Italy — the only one breaking sharply with the *ancièn regime* of the "partitocracy."

Two months after this "apotheosis" of federalism, the winds began to shift. Berlusconi's political debut complicated matters. While no one can claim to be the legitimate owner of the kind of neo-liberalism elaborated by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher a few years earlier, the *Cavaliere* was clearly hunting in Bossi's estate. By recycling this neo-liberalism in the most banal version and combining it with classical Italian nationalism, Berlusconi sought to capture the whole right-wing of Bossi's following, altogether ignoring the problem of centralization. This was political self-delusion.

Confronted with this challenge, Bossi persuaded his troops that the only possible strategy for the Northern League was to enter into an alliance with forces he described as "not yet federalist, but no longer in favor of state centralism." Thus, in Bologna, he proclaimed this policy to be "provisional and revocable," and clearly moved closer to *Forza Italia*. Similarly, he made it clear that the League was not responsible for Berlusconi's other alliance, with Gianfranco Fini's *Alleanza Nazionale.* The implication was that the implementation of the federal project had been postponed.

Bossi was not being duplicitous: his Assago and Bologna speeches left no room for ambiguity. The purpose was to help the whole country move toward "integral federalism" by making temporary alliances with groups which, although exhibiting no clear federalist leanings, could be persuaded otherwise. This was probably a rather dangerous move, and important sectors of public opinion did not understand it or pretended not to.

The national elections of March 27-28, 1994 produced no real winner.

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8. See Gian Enrico Rusconi, *Se Cessiamo di Essere una Nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993).

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Berlusconi, however, ended up reaping all the benefits of the "alliance" because neither Bossi nor Fini could claim leadership of the government. It was obvious at this point that the leader of the League had his back to the wall, not *vis à vis* his campaign "allies," (who were now his majority partners) but with respect to the public expectations he had fostered with proposals specifically ruling out the capture of central power — the *Palazzo*.

The election results led to a crisis within the movement and to the third turning point in the League's recent history, which took place at the February 10-12, 1995 Milan congress. At first, this crisis seemed to be the result of the League's glaring lack of intellectually and politically competent personnel able to run the government. Compounded with internal struggles among different factions, this crisis tended to weaken the League by highlighting conflicts between such different personalities as Roberto Maroni, Irene Pivetti, Franco Rocchetta,[9] Gipo Fartassino,[10] Luigi Negri,[11] Erminio Boso,[12] and less strong characters who became ministers: the economist Pagliarini, who became Minister of the Budget, and the loyal and honest but not extremely competent Speroni, who became Minister for Institutional Reforms. In addition to the irritating problem of having to postpone the implementation of federalism, there was always the question of what constituted the movement's real "social base": the Northern people, the *popolo leghista.* A clear definition of this base was necessary to allow the League to present itself as a specific phenomenon within a specific context — not as a vague "echo" of neo-liberal, populist or anti-politicians fashions.

It is not an accident that the Ministry for Institutional Reforms, coveted by Miglio, was assigned to Speroni, leading to a devastating break between Miglio and Bossi. This break has been explained in terms of the "*profesur*" taking offence at the self-taught "*senatur*" for questioning his intellectual prestige. As is often the case, this "psychological" interpretation is not altogether convincing. In Bologna Miglio had already delivered

9. The historical leader of the "Liga Veneta," Rocchetta was always opposed to Lombards' hegemony within the Northern League. Although he became Sub-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, he eventually left the League.

10. Farassino is the leader of the Piedmontese group. Although he has always emphasized his differences with Bossi, he has remained faithful to the latter's line.

11. Negri became National Secretary of the Lombard League when Bossi left the post at the end of 1993. Yet he became one of the first "dissidents."

12. The hotheaded leader of the Trentin League, Boso was the founder and head of the "independentist current," while always remaining a member of the League's "hard core." His faction seems to be tolerated by Bossi for reasons of balance.

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a speech which sounded like his testament. Although the audience cheered, it was clear that the "Provisional Federal Constitution" was no longer on the agenda.

Even before the December 23, 1994 fall of the Berlusconi government, the League's federalist doctrine had been shaken. It began to be questioned at the June 19, 1994 Pontida congress, where Bossi delivered a long speech to close the chaotic period surrounding the designation of the speakers of the Chamber and Senate with a surprising economistic emphasis. He proposed a "diffuse popular shareholding" in opposition to the "monopolistic" or "duopolistic" tendencies of the president of the Fininvest holding company, "The dialectic is no longer between the public monopolies and the private ones, but between private monopoly and a diffuse shareholding; this is the popular League's liberalism (*liberismo*). . . . Our key points are: privatization, not in the interests of selected investors but in favor of workers and small and medium-size firms, the abolition of the welfare state system, and federalism." In the same speech, Bossi violently objected to the media's claim that he advocated a British-style "Labourist system" for Italy and rejected any further consideration of the socialist system, as well as any dealings with the PDS (the successor of the Italian Communist Party). All the same, the "perverse effects" of an "unnatural" partnership with the state and the changes concerning the federalist theme, with a strong emphasis on the "popular League" (*popolare e popolana,* roughly meaning "popular and common"), were striking.

Three main points were obvious: a) a significant reduction of the importance of "institutional federalism." Miglio's project now seemed old-fashioned and the only proposed reform concerned an electoral system to be elaborated by each region before the 1995 local elections. The project of the "three Italies" seemed to have disappeared. b) "Membership federalism" also seemed missing. There was no longer any reference to group self-consciousness, Northern culture, etc. Matching jurisdictions and territorial units were no longer an explicit objective. There was, however, a clear articulation of conflicts between regions refusing to be relegated to the "periphery" in relation to the Lombard "center," with a new League *nomenklatura.* An additional problem was raised by "independents," who feared the League might become absorbed with "Italian" problems. c) The emphasis now seemed to have shifted to "economic federalism." The celebration of the "working person" (a concept rather different from that of "working class" because it comprises wage earners, owners and managers of the small and medium-size firms, as well as professionals) seemed to be a

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symbolic stand in opposition to Berlusconian monopolies, just as "integral federalism" was previously contraposed to "Rome power." Legitimacy now seemed predicated on class rather than territory.

Later, in Genoa (November 6, 1994), Speroni presented to the "Federal Assembly of the Northern League" a very official looking "Proposal for a Federalist Reform of the Constitution of the Italian Republic." In the obvious effort to appear more elaborate than Miglio's Assago project outlined a year earlier, this 26 pages document (containing 8 titles and 147 articles) prefigured 9 "federated states."[13] This rather laborious exercise arbitrarily defined jurisdictions, relations between different territorial domains, etc. It had nothing in common with all the efforts during the previous four years to establish and justify the relation between the various areas in order to ascertain the very reasons of the federalist principle and its connection with specific Northern problems and idiosyncrasies. It appeared to be a mere technocratic territorial division very similar to various decentralization or regionalization plans proposed during the 1970s. The units had nothing in common with the three "self-representation" criteria constituting the basic justification of the League's original federal plan. The only thing this plan seemed to provide was a kind of moral satisfaction for the League's regional ("national") sub-leaders. The actual content of federalism became increasingly vague, although the word was deployed almost obsessively.

Here it is impossible to retrace the history of the Berlusconi cabinet and its fall (precipitated by Bossi) or the political events that followed: the formation of a technical cabinet with Lamberto Dini as Premier, the controversy between Scalfaro and Berlusconi concerning the "legitimacy" of Parliament after a shift in the majority coalition and the need for new elections, the "flirtation" between Buttiglione, now Secretary of the PPI — the successor to the Christian Democratic Party) and Berlusconi, Romano Prodi's attempt to organize a Center-Left "pole", etc. Two crucial events, however, need to be mentioned — both related to Bossi's speech at the Milan congress of February 11, 1995 and the League's "new orientation": the third turning point. The two events are the endless vacillation of the League's Deputy (Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni) between being loyal to Bossi or to his Premier and all the League's fuss about it; and the debate concerning Berlusconi's double monopolistic position in the media

13. Emilia, and Romagna were separated, then reconnected respectively, one with Tuscany and the other with central-eastern Italy, in a clear attempt to reconstitute the former papal state.

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(as the owner of Fininvest TV, on the one hand, and as the political leader in control of public TV, on the other), and a proposed anti-trust law pending in Parliament. Eventually a parliamentary commission was established on Irene Pivetti's initiative (as President of the Chamber of Deputies) to review the Mammi law (about TV franchises) without withdrawing the proposal for a future anti-trust law from the agenda.

Thus the League's reorientation had to do with whether it was desirable or necessary to remain part of Berlusconi's "Freedom Pole" (i.e., not to cause the fall of the government coalition) and, subsequently, to break completely with the alliance? Considering his economic position (and monopoly of the media), was Berlusconi a real danger for democracy, especially in subsequent elections?

The collapse of the party system had been one of the causes of the late 1993 crisis (the second turning point) within the League. The Berlusconi cabinet had not succeeded in putting an end to the collapse of the party system. On the contrary, it had intensified. Thus the question regarding the League's future had to be posed in a context characterized by a creeping institutional crisis, where the term *golpe* ("coup," from the Spanish) was constantly thrown about. In this context, the League's project became lost. Furthermore, through the participation of Roberto Maroni, the whole movement could easily be held hostage by the general political argument about the country's future, from December 1994 to the present. The entire political system is collapsing, and this has serious consequences for the Northern League's base.

Bossi's reaction seems to have been twofold. First, it was necessary to show that further participation in the so-called "Freedom Pole" would inevitably lead to the disappearance of all the League's distinguishing characteristics. Second, and in contradiction with the first objective, it was necessary to transform the League into a political party, i.e., to redefine it in terms of the general framework of the prevailing political system. The first objective resulted in severe criticism of the *Cavaliere*'s adventurism as a latent propensity toward real fascism — even more dangerous than Fini's. Notwithstanding the constant tribute he pays to the new PDS leaders and to the new PPI's left wing (hostile to Buttiglione and close to Prodi),[14] his supporters' dominant opinion leads him to define the movement as "the Center." This leads not only to a classical understanding of this "Center" (neither Right nor Left) but to its redefinition in terms of federalist themes.

14. Both learnings (Massimo d'Alema for the PDS and the party's president Bianchi for the PPI) were represented in the Milan congress, and exchanges have been warm.

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For Bossi, the League's new logic expresses the "natural federalist sensitivity" of the "naturally Center-oriented" citizens, i.e., those whom he increasingly referred to in Milan as the "*ceto medio*." This *ceto medio* (something slightly different from the classical "middle class" of Anglo-Saxon sociology)[15] would provide the natural support of a federalism pitting "societal versus political autonomy." This "*ceto medio*" would constitute the League's new social base, displacing the Northern population.

This shift entails two important adjustments: a) the movement now locates itself within the general framework of the existing political system and is no longer radically opposed to the "party system"; and b) the three previously mentioned components of a "hyper-culture" retain only historical interest as the movement's "matrix," since the new *Lega Nord-Italia federale* is now an undifferentiated movement (with respect to the Italian nation). The difference between state and society is no longer articulated through the autonomy of local groups but through an almost "anthropological" character — a kind of "inner federalism." Here federalism turns into a mere "frame of mind." Two questions must be asked at this point: What are the reasons of this change? Did it not lead to a significant weakening of the concept of federalism?

Regarding the reasons for the change, Bossi's approach is rather opportunistic. It is easy for him to claim that: "The middle class is now in a difficult situation. The previous definition of the [Italian] party system was predicated on the communist threat: at that time small and medium-size firms obtained important advantages from political forces and large monopolies. Now the pressure of communism is over; large capitalist interests, more powerful than ever, need no longer appear democratic. Thus the middle class must take charge of its own defense; it must thus give itself a political force located in the Center." Accordingly, this political force is "naturally" federalist, and the realization of this federalism has always been the League's main objective. The most immediate aim of this "self-defense" is the anti-trust bill and the revision of the law about TV franchises. Without these measures, the country is always threatened by elections before the expiration of the term and then the population, "bombarded" by the *Fininvest* networks, is likely to be led to support Berlusconi, which may lead to a *piduista* system.[16]

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15. Thus the Belgian "Ministry of the Middle Classes" deals primarily with social and economic questions concerning independent workers, professionals, etc.

16. "*Piduista*" refers to the famous Masonic Lodge P 2, an association of illicit economic interests and secret service personnel during the early 1980s.

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Here Maroni's position is not easy to defend. Even when he argues that in a bipolar system the Center is inevitably marginalized, Bossi replies that the League is "above" it all. Is this convincing? Is it possible to be both inside and outside the political game, with the limited support of a diffuse social group such as the *ceto- medio* and on the basis of "federalism as a frame of mind"? The whole approach appears idealistic and has no practical federalist implications. It looks like a façade. If so, what lies behind it? Probably a change in the League's base that Bossi, maybe not altogether consciously, is following intuitively. Three hypotheses can be advanced concerning the basic paradoxes in the League's thinking.

1. It is always possible to define a social group territorially by emphasizing its difference *vis à vis* neighboring groups, and thus to delegate limited powers to a state. This has nothing to do with nationalism, xenophobia, etc., and is a future possibility. Such an approach, however, is hard to defend, since competing ideologies, based on globalization, communication technologies, etc. are extremely strong and attractive.

2. It is contradictory to believe in hard work as a value and engage in over-production for external markets, i.e., to advocate austerity at home and profligacy for the customers, as well as to deploy inexpensive ways of producing by taking advantage of informal systems and the development of infrastructures, advanced technologies and dynamic marketing methods. The myth of the man who works and buys as a peasant in order to save and invest so that he can sell to people who overconsume and waste is a utopia very close to the League's unconscious philosophy. It was easy to foresee the day when the "good hard-working Northern Italian" would shop at large suburban supermarkets rather that at local shops or city centers or spend their holidays in Prague, Paris and the Caribbean Islands, when the "good paternalistic owner" would hire Senegalese workers at lower wages. At that point something had to change for the League.

3. Finally, was not the League's ideology a late product of (Northern Italian) prosperity and full employment in the Po basin? Is it not much easier to ask: "Why can't Southerners behave like we do?" when all one's children have good jobs than when the usual crises of advanced industrial societies have finally hit the "little paradises" — the blessed areas around Varese, Brescia, Belluno, Vicenza, etc.?

It would have been possible for the League to look for a defense line compatible with its celebrated Northern identity and values on both the socio-economic and cultural level — an austerity line. That may have been more in line with its ideology than following the present evolution

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without even examining or criticizing it. The League, however, never really developed this propensity for self-criticism (and no Italian social scientists or university professors have ever been very helpful in these matters). The conjunction of wild affluence and anguish concerning the future may have destroyed "Northern thought." If it does not choose the *federalismo delle cento città* (the federalism of a hundred cities) celebrated by some mayors,[17] — something far from the previous themes about territory, identity and the state — the League's "grand design" seems doomed.

17. Enzo Bianco, "Il Federalismo delle Cento Città," in *Quale Federalismo? Interviste sull'Italia del Futuro*, M. Sabella. N. Urbinati. eds. (Florence: Vallecchi, 1994). Bianco is the mayor of Catania and a member of the Center-Left *Partito Repubblicano Alleanza Democratica.*

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The Politics of Arcological Utopia: Soleri on Ecology, Architecture and Society

Tim Luke

Atop a low mesa above the Aqua Fria river in central Arizona, a unique laboratory devoted to testing a new ecological model has been slowly developing for twenty-five years. A project of Paolo Soleri's Cosanti Foundation, Arcosanti is a working prototype for a new kind of city — one being designed, built, and inhabited as a three-dimensional, highly concentrated megastructure.[1] To house a city of 5,000 to 6,000 people, Arcosanti will occupy only fourteen acres of land in the midst of an 860 acre greenbelt/park area/agricultural zone. The closely articulated structures of Arcosanti will be not much more than one-quarter of a mile on any one side, but they will rise to as much as twenty-five stories tall. Within them, Soleri and his co-workers hope to locate all of the economic and social infrastructure of any modern city, while providing residents up to 2,000 square feet of living space per family to use more or less as they please. Outside, everyone will be able to enjoy the expansive views of another 3,000 acres to be kept as undeveloped open space.

To respond to the mounting environmental crises, Soleri has used Arcosanti to rethink modern urban design and planning. Instead of accepting the logic of today's two-dimensional cities, such as Phoenix or Los Angeles, which follow an automobile-driven "scatterization" pattern by pushing outward as their inner cores atrophy and die, Arcosanti is a laboratory for urban implosion.[2] Soleri's unusual fusion of architecture with ecology in what he

1. See Paolo Soleri, *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?* (Santa Monica, CA: VTI Press, 1987); and, Ralph Blumenthal, "Futuristic Visions in the Desert," *New York Times*, (February 1, 1987).

2. For more discussion, see Soleri, "Flight from Flatness" in *The Bridge Between Matter and Spirit is Matter Becoming Spirit: The Arcology of Paolo Soleri* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1973), pp. 198-201.

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calls "arcology" bans the automobile from the city in favor of pedestrian walkways aided by fixed mechanical people-movers (elevators, escalators, and moving sidewalks).[3] In a city of such complex compactness, most journeys by foot would require no more than fifteen or twenty minutes — about the same amount of time it takes to walk from inside a major mall to the outer ring of the parking lot in Phoenix or Los Angeles. In staging this controlled implosion, Soleri seeks to stabilize his community at about 350 people per acre (ten times the population densities of New York City). Its ecological superiority derives from the elimination of the automobile and all the associated space costs charged off to streets, highways, parking, dealerships, fueling, repairs, and junkyards necessary to support an automotive transportation system.[4]

By rethinking the 20th century industrial city from the ground up, Soleri's fusion of high technology and ecological responsibility provides one of the most realistic responses to the environmental crisis — although Arcosanti is frequently derided as the misbegotten folly of a utopian dreamer. This is not merely a paper proposal. His arcological alternative is already being built and lived in. Despite all its promise, however, much of Arcosanti's potential remains unfulfilled. There are many unresolved problems in Soleri's ecological project, casting doubt over how successfully it has been implemented in Arizona since 1970.

Soleri's Background

Paolo Soleri was born in Turin, Italy in 1919. Educated at the Turin Polytechnical Institute, he joined Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin West outside Phoenix, in 1948, and along with his wife Corolyn and Mark Mills, he built "Dome House" near Cave Creek, Arizona — a structure closely integrated into its environment in accord with Wright's organic architecture theories. In 1950, Soleri returned to Italy, where he built a house and studio. Soon he was commissioned by the Solimene family to design a new ceramics factory. As the factory was being constructed, Soleri became interested in the ceramic manufacturing process. Once the plant was completed in 1955, Soleri and his wife moved back to Arizona, buying five isolated acres of land in Paradise Valley outside Phoenix (about fifteen

3. Soleri uses "arcology" in many ways: to describe a method of thinking, the practice of design, an approach to environmental organization, and some actual physical structure embodying its principles. See Luca Zevi, "Paolo Soleri: A Message to be Dug Out," in *L'Architettura: Cronache e Storia,* No. 422 (December, 1990), pp. 849-850.

4. See Paolo Soleri, *Arcology: Architecture in the Image of Man* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1973).

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miles southwest of Wright's Taliesin West) where they began to produce ceramic and bronze objects, including the now world-renowned windbells and windchimes that have provided most of the funds for Arcosanti's modest yearly construction budget. In 1956, Soleri also established the Cosanti Foundation as a studio, shop, and residence to produce his ceramics and, later, to articulate his architectural ideas.[5] In the 1950s and 1960s Soleri began developing his maverick approach to reengineering the structural interfaces of the environment and society while watching Phoenix encroach on his desert homesite. After gaining notoriety in the 1960s as an ethical philosopher, social critic and architectural visionary, he began building the Arcosanti megastructure at Cordes Junction, Arizona in 1970. This project has occupied him over the past quarter century.

The ceramics connection is not insignificant. Casting ceramic and bronze items provided the Soleris with much of their income during these early years, while the techniques used in casting ceramic artifacts also moved Soleri to experiment with them as architectural construction techniques. Soleri notes, "I began working with earth and silt in the early 1950s. Originally I became interested in using desert soil and the silt abundant in the dry Arizona river beds because of their inherent properties and availability. Experimentation proved the usefulness of earth and silt as molding mediums for many types of crafts projects. Clay and plaster were the first materials that we cast in earth or silt molds. We produced ceramic windbells from earth molds, and plaster architectural models from originals which had been carved in silt. The use of earth and silt for making forms on which to cast concrete was the logical next step."[6]

From 1962 to 1974, six of the structures at Cosanti were "earth cast" using river silt forms, with the help of architecture students interested in learning these unusual building techniques. According to Soleri, "Today these structures comprise the Cosanti complex, and are used as craft studios, work areas, offices, and residences. The Cosanti complex is the result of a combination of ancient craft techniques, new variations on these techniques, scrounged and donated materials, aesthetic perceptions, unorthodox architectural concepts, and the sweat of many workers."[7] The workshops moved out to the Arcosanti site during the 1970s, and much of

5. See Francesco Ranocchi, "From a House to a Piece of City: Paolo Soleri's Ideas and Experiments," in *L' Architettura: Cronache e Storia, op. cit.*, pp. 856-857

6. Paolo Soleri and Scott M. Davis, *Paolo Soleri's Earthcasting for Sculpture. Models and Construction* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books, 1984).

7. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

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that structure also has been built with casting techniques extrapolated from the Cosanti ceramic production process.

Most of Soleri's writings date back to the 1960s and 1970s, when he chose to engage many of the leading pop icons — Marshall McLuhan, R. Buckminster Fuller, Teilhard de Chardin, the Woodstock Nation, transcendental meditation, hippie communes — in his discussion of arcology. Today, many of these writings seem fairly anachronistic. The Teilhardian tone can be completely baffling, even though the insights derived from this bizarre philosophy are central to the project of arcology. Yet much of what he wrote twenty or thirty years ago is only more pertinent today.

Soleri is not a philosopher for cynical postmodernists. His thinking unfolds through rigid oppositions and hard contradictions: matter and spirit, process and growth, scatterization and complexification, Alpha God and Omega God, giganticism and miniaturization. Architecture, as a mediation of "theotechnology" to realize "the urban effect" out of chaotic nature, is the means chosen by Soleri to transform humanity and realize its inner cosmic mission.[8] This approach will rankle postmodern sensibilities, because Soleri is unabashedly anthropocentric and provocative. Yet, his ideas make a significant contribution to radical ecology. Few thinkers have contributed as much to understanding how the built environment, nature, social ecologies or modern cities actually operate.

Soleri's Project

Architecture for Soleri is a vital social calling. It can lead to an ecological revolution, because it is essentially an informational process rather than a material activity. Every edifice ultimately operates as an actor: "it is actually information in and of itself instead of being a remote presence."[9] This pertains to all architecture. Thus, architecture can be apprehended as much more than mere construction. "Architecture is the alterations made upon nature by the organic, the psychological, the mental, the components of man's consciousness where the social-cultural stresses operate within and emanate out of the human kind. Architecture. . . is not only a shelter for communication and information institutions, a medium, but it is also. . . mass information itself."[10]Architecture materially expresses what society does. Since architecture-as-information helps constitute personality and

8. See Paolo Soleri, *The Omega Seed: An Eschatological Hypothesis* (Garden City, NJ: Anchor Books, 1981).
9. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

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community, "it is then only logical that the pauperization of our soul and the soul of society coincide with the pauperization of the environment. One is the cause and reflection of the other."[11] Any radical social transformation also demands not only a reordering of ideas and institutions but also of society's most basic informational technology: its architecture. According to Soleri, ecological development must be rethought as part of theological and technological evolution. Organizing spaces and designing places is an enterprise invested in "the business of sacredness." While today's urban metroplexes fall short of this task, "the discrepancy is to be seen as a gap between what ought to be and what is." Thus, correct ecological design can be directed to attain "the *Civitas Dei.* It is that complex machine for information which by the non-expedient ways of design also becomes knowledge in itself, where the media has finally, if only within limits, sublimated itself into the message, a large interiority reverentially turned into the handling of *particulae sacrae*, the polis dwellers."[12] These are valid insights but to reach the end of this trail Soleri rides through the strange badlands of Teilhardian eschatology.

Soleri freely and unabashedly mingles elements of theological speculation, moral outrage, construction theory, and eschatological design to advance his "metaschematics for cosmogenesis." Along with Arcosanti, arcologies represent much more than mere experimentations with alternative urban technology or subversive commitarian resistance. Arcosanti is both, but these are secondary aspects of what Soleri sees primarily as an ethical struggle for spiritual enlightenment. His architectural ideas constitute a technology for the realization of an emergent divinity from a volatile universe: "we can say that the true God is *not yet*, but the true God *will be*, because the creational process is."[13]

These claims violate many modern assumptions: matter is not dead, spirit is not merely transcendent, the universe is not a finished process, man is not a machine, god is not an abstraction. These unusual claims ,in turn are derived from Teilhard de Chardin's pantheistic musings.[14]

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11. *Ibid.*, p. 225.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.
13. Paolo Soleri, *Technology and Cosmogenesis* (New York: Paragon House, 1985), p. viii.
14. For more elaboration of the philosophies advanced by Teilhard de Chardin, see *The Phenomenon of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961); *Building the Earth* (Wilkes-Barre, PA: Dimension Books, 1965); *The Appearance of Man* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); *Hymn of the Universe* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); and, *Man's Place in Nature: The Human Zoological Group* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).

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Unfortunately, Soleri's arcological turn cannot be understood independently of Teilhard's unique fusion of faith and reason in the nexus of technology and cosmogenesis. These pronouncements, like those of many "prophets," are not particularly systematic or lucid.[15] And, the Teilhardian conceptual register that Soleri adopts often leaves him way out on the margins of modern politic discourse, sounding very much like a crackpot. Organism, for Soleri, is the mediation of matter and spirit where becoming slips into being and being advances becoming. Accordingly, "Organism is the mineral complacence forced into the turmoil of the organic. Organism is the relative simplicity of the early organic becoming more and more fragile, yet more and more expectant of the unpredictable. Organism is the relatively tranquil instinctual superseded by the anguish of the mental. The Infant God is restless, demanding, harsh, violent, and prodigious."[16]Infant God, as autonomous conscious organism, is the promotion of "mineral reality's," or matter, evolution into "mental reality," or mind. These primal dynamics, in turn, adhere to a normative imperative and structural regularity in the universe.

Soleri's unembarrassed representation of the transcendent social *telos* in God terms derives from Teilhard's vision of the Omega Point: a teleological target that can and will draw humanity toward its positive effects in spite of the intervening misadventures in irrationality, inequity and irresponsibility. For Soleri, it is important to remember: "1) God is not because God 'will be' and 2) God 'is' the urban effect. These assertions form an eschatological argument. It is absurd and/or blasphemous unless one distinguishes between that which is potential and that which is actual. Because God is not (as yet), the urban effect is not (as yet). There is an immanent urban effect that incarnates a limited divinity, the immanent God."[17] The urban effect is "the eschatological denouement of consciousness"; and its origin is to be found in "the ability that appears in matter, when matter attains certain

15. A sense of what he believes about "the true God that will be" can be garnered from passages such as these: "It is a creature, a reality, that generates within itself its own transcendence. Because of its youth, most of this creature is still in 'darkness.' What generates within and issues without begins to assume the responsibility for the creation of Omega, now roughly incarnate in fragments. This Infant God, or Gods (perhaps as many as there are solar systems) are autonomously generating consciousness, consciousness generating anticipations (hypotheses and simulations), anticipations instigating action, action expressing and acting out the manipulative and transformational power of organism. The Infant God is operational."See Soleri, *Technology and Cosmogenesis*, *op. cit.*, pp. viii-ix.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Paolo Soleri, *Fragments: A Selection from the Sketch Books of Paolo Soleri* (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p. 23.

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morphological properties, to become responsive to stimuli and stresses in ways that are not the norm but the exception."[18] Matter becomes spirit as it integrates complexity, miniaturization and duration in mass-energy, leaping beyond the physical/material into the psychological/spiritual. The urban effect is to be found in every living thing, and when organized rightly, "God, the Omega Seed is the entelechy or the urban effect."[19] The super-persons of the future will not be extraordinary men or women. Instead, they will be "the totalized condition of which humans are a part. A premonition of this condition is contained in the urbis. This *Civitate Dei* is not where the divine dwells; it is the divine itself. It is not the city of God; it is the God city."[20] The invention of God is vital, because by inventing God humans either invent perfection or advance the perfecting process. The fine points of Soleri's engagement with Teilhard's philosophy need not be discussed here. While Soleri clearly disagrees with Teilhard at several places, he also sees his arcologies as expressions of eschatological thinking.[21]

Ecology becomes humanity's most essential science inasmuch as the Earth's ecosystems are mind-generating, spirit-attaining processes in which matter becomes spirit. Aesthetic practices or "esthetogenesis" are a key mediation of this dialectic.[22] Aesthetic imagination and artistic discipline become the vital sparks, wholly dependent upon individual labor and communal energy, animating matter with spiritual significance. Soleri's ecological thinking is grounded on what he calls the "complexity-miniaturization-duration imperative." He sees all Nature "from bacteria to God" conforming to three fundamental principles: "1) COMPLEXITY: Many events and processes cluster wherever a living process is going on. The make-up of the process is immensely complex and ever intensifying. 2) MINIATURIZATION: The nature of complexity demands the rigorous utilization of all resources — mass-energy and space-time, for example.

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 86.
20. *Ibid.*
21. More concretely, "Arcosanti tries to 'radicalize' the proposition by attempting to reinstate the working presence of complexity-miniaturization, quite probably in the best 'Teilhardian tradition.' Therefore, the 'how-ness' of Arcosanti is the quest of a more fitting instrument for the human animal to go on in the transcendental quest for grace, also, I think, a Teilhardian aim." Soleri, *Technology and Cosmogenesis*, pp. 120-121.
22. Art is the center of an ecology-environment-theology triad: "1) The environment: immanent manifestation of an eschatological drive. 2) Religion: simulation model of anticipated perfection, space, and the fully aware divinity of a concluded reality. 3) The esthetic: emergence of the spirit from matter in specific particles of grace (a novel, a dance and so on)." Soleri, *Fragments*, p. 190.

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Therefore, whenever complexity is at work, miniaturization is mandated and a part of the process. 3) DURATION: Process implies extension of time. Temporal extension is warped by living stuff into acts of duration. A possible resolution of 'living time' is the metamorphosis of time into pure duration, i.e. the eventual 'living outside of time.'"[23] This idiosyncratic reading of the cosmos provides a nomological code that Soleri regards as "a clear, forceful normative light for any living process to follow."[24] There is an immanent order in Nature that human reason and imagination can discover. Through arcological design, Arcosanti's construction is being organized with an awareness of these norms, because all of "Nature and the living are dependent on such coherence."[25]

Contrasting the sprawl of lower life forms (coral, bacteria, mold) to the concentration of higher ones (bees, wasps, ants) in nature, Soleri regards the most successful and sophisticated forms of life, like the human city, as those allowing complexity/miniaturization/duration to coalesce. Cities are, in fact, expressions of genuine ecological balance between city and country, even though these relations have become attenuated and/or broken in the post-WWII as non-city/non-country exurban and suburban spaces proliferate as more simple, more hypertrophic, and more transitory sprawls. Sprawl unfolds on an inhuman scale, because it is fabricated for and by the automobile. This abuse of space is the sociopathic condition Soleri seeks to cure.

Point Omega, the Omega God, Omega Seed are presented as the *telos* of these evolutionary struggles for the divinization of the universe. Humanity, or "wo-man" in Soleri's terms, is the outcome of three billion years of life's evolution on Earth. Life's creational activities are continuously generating new life-forms, struggling to realize new existences for conscious, sensitive, creative beings like human beings.[26] As with other idealist philosophies of history, humanity is the critical mediation of the

23. Soleri, *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?*, p. 11.
24. *Ibid*
25. *Ibid.*
26. The thinking and doing of such conscious beingsare instances of spiritual genesis: "The premise that *homo faber* is also a symbol of *cosmos faber,* the 'fabricating' the cosmos is engaged in, the cosmo-genesis that providentially is a soul genesis. The genesis of spirit is not of spirit (God) generating matter with all the ultimately inconsequential history of a dispensable process of being; it is instead matter generating spirit within the excruciatingly noble and suffering process of metamorphosis. Therefore the urgency of *doing as thinking.* Because the thinking per se — and I include in it contemplating-mediating — is the beautiful flower of a *doing* that has generated brain-mind, that 'thinking machine-performance' of immense nobility and resourcefulness at the apex of the pyramid (hierarchy) of the food chain. Without such a monumental pyramid, thinking-mediating-transcending is impossible, in fact, inconceivable." See Soleri, *Technology and Cosmogenesis*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

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being/becoming dialectic. Soleri gives it primacy because humans are the top of the food chain, making them as the crown of creation.

Here technology jibes with cosmogenesis, and Soleri's own arcological enterprise assumes its eschatological assignment. To develop human kind, there are innumerable post-biological technologies needed to accelerate these evolutionary trends. An arcology or "ecological city" is one of these vital post-biological technologies.[27] The contemporary environmental crisis arises from the corrupt values of contemporary industrial civilization or from mindless tendencies toward simplification, giganticism, and ephemerality, disrupting and dissipating the spirit and matter needed to advance these projects.

Attacking the sprawl of contemporary metroplexes with all of their self-destructive tendencies, then, becomes a spiritual crusade to be waged by divinely-charged design theory, engineering innovations, and communal revitalization. Sprawl violates the complexity/miniaturization/duration commandments of cosmogenesis; arcology can fulfill them "in such a way as to cause matter to transcend itself."[28] It registers this power, because archologies are engines of "the urban effect" or mediations of "the transformation of mineral matter into mind via the potentially unlimited power of complexification and miniaturization."[29] To invent "the idea-city" of arcology is to reinvent the ordered housing of mass-energy "capable of serving and ex-pressing what might be called the transpersonal consciousness of the society, the cultural-theological-creating genesis."[30] From the esthetogenesis implied by the urban effect, Soleri holds that the ideals of the good life will be produced: synergy, beauty, frugality, knowledge, compassion, interdependence, sensitivity, transcendence, cooperation. So along with the urban effect, cosmogenesis becomes being.[31]

The Arcological Effect

The theological twist in Soleri's thought is tied, by virtue of his reflections on the nature of life and consciousness, to ecology and technology.

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27. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 20
29. Soleri, *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?*, *op. cit.*, p. 92.
30. Soleri, *Technology and Cosmogenesis*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 139. Human society, when rightly housed and morally aware, will be intent upon "the extrusion of meaning, lasting meaning, out of a mineral (mass-energy) reality, powerfully but not fatally swaying the conscience generating within it. . . . the fruition would be the seed of the Cosmos, the Omega Seed, and within it the resurrection/manifestation of all and everything. *That is the end of time and the full dominion of duration."*

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The genetic patterns of the Omega Seed show that "*in any given system, the most complex quantum is also the liveliest; in any given system the liveliest quantum is also the most miniaturized.*"[32] To the extent that human beings make and are made by their environments, Soleri proposes to rationalize the processes of their evolution. The ends of complexity, vitality, and miniaturization must be kept in mind as societies design their habitats, because it puts them in a much better position to solve many of the most pressing environmental problems. Arcology follows these principles and captures all of the beneficial pay-offs of six major architectural "effects." While they are simple, they also provide a remarkable solution for many of environmental problems: "The *greenhouse effect* is a membrane that seals off an area of ground that can be cultivated, extending the growing season to practically twelve months, and also saves a great amount of water. . . . With the 'greenhouse,' one has intensive agriculture, limited use of water and extension of seasonal cycles. This is the *horticultural effect*. Then there is the *apse effect*. Some structures can take in the benign radiation of the sun in the winter months, and tend to cut off the harsh radiation of the sun in the summer. By the *chimney effect*, which is connected with the greenhouse effect, one can convey, passively, energy through the movement of air; the heat from one area to another. So we have these four effects: there is also the capacity of masonry to accumulate and store energy — the *heat sink effect*. With relatively large masonry, one can store energy during the warm hours of the day, and give it out during cool or cold hours of the night. The intent is to see if these five effects can be organized around what I call the *urban effect*. The urban effect is the capacity of mineral matter, to become lively, sensitive, responsive, memorizing . . . . If we were to coordinate those six effects together, then we definitely could save on resources like land, water, time, energy, materials, and have a better ecological sanity."[33] Arcological structures can harness all these effects by suspending the two-dimensional explosion of urban areas in a new three-dimensional implosion of urban structures. Radically reconceptualizing individual houses, towns and cities as social aggregates with immanent rational potentials, instead of seeing them as personal real estate attached to social irrationalities, is extremely difficult. But it is possible: "Arcosanti is an ongoing process pursuing the urban effect within the context of the other five effects."[34]

32. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 139.

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The arcology is pure ecological transformation in that it seeks to harmonize cities as "a biomental organism contained in a mineral structure" with their biophysical environments.[35] The scatterization of automobile/railway/street car urbanization is attacked by miniaturizing the logistics of energy and matter into super-dense structures. Soleri believes these systems will check the degenerative decline of cities by reducing the waste of energy, material, time, and labor used to maintain their irrational and anti-ecological forms. Moreover, the concentration of inhabitants should also promote the integration of different ethnic, racial, age, and religious groups. Health care would be easier to deliver, housing would be accessible to all, and cultural development would characterize the public life of the arcological city. Similarly, good land would be freed for agricultural, forestry and recreational uses in the areas surrounding the arcological megastructures with their now much higher residential densities.

Arcologies are not improbable utopias. As Soleri observes, the naval architecture of today's passenger ships is very closely related: "the common characteristics are compactness and definite boundary; the functional fullness of an organism designed for the care of many, if not most. of man's needs; a definite and unmistakable three dimensionality . . . . the liner, the concept of it, can open up and, retaining its organizational suppleness, become truly a 'machine for living,' that is to say, a physical configuration that makes man physically free."[36] This analogy is exploited in several proposed arcologies, including Novanoah I (a city for 400,000 to float in coastal waters or on the open sea), Novanoah II (a city for 2,400,000 also to ply some ocean expanse), Noahbabel (a city of 90,000 to be fixed in the sea off of some coastal setting), and Babelnoah (a city of 6,000,000 for a flat coastal region).[37] Of course, all these imaginary cities, which are little more than sketches published twenty-five years ago, have never been drawn in detail or planned on a full-scale, although they substantiate Soleri's analogy between large passenger ships and arcological cities.[38] Only

35. Soleri, *Arcology: Architecture in the Image of Man*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
37. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-61.
38. *Ibid.* pp. 62-118. Once these urban images are made plausible as extrapolations of ocean liners to ocean cities, Soleri articulates other designs for many different land-based sites: Arcoforte (a city of 20,000 on a sea cliff), Babel II A (a city of 800,000 on marsh land), Arcvillage I (a farming community of 9,000 near good farm land), Logology (a city of 900,000 for hilly flood plains), Arckibuz (a desert village for 2,500), Arcollective (a cold region village of 2,000), Veladiga (a city in or as a river dam for 15,000), Stonebow (a bridge city of 200,000 to be built over or in a large canyon), and for the ultimate architectural challenge, Asteromo (a city of 70,000 to be build in outer space).)

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one of his smallest designs, Arcosanti, has gone from the drafting table to the construction site, but all of its masses are arranged to express the six effects that arocologies must exploit.

Soleri's Problems

In one way or another, like many teleological theories of history before it, Soleri's project almost presumes the existence of God cities and God citizens before they exist in order to make them come into being. Living amidst a culture that obviously accepts, if not openly chooses, to produce urbanization on the order of the obscene metropolitan sprawl found in Atlanta, Dallas, Los Angeles, Houston or Phoenix, Soleri slogs forward at Arcosanti with a handful of true believers sharing a vision of the ecological sense of his project. Content with casting wind bells and evangelizing the few tourists who show up everyday for tours of Cosanti and Arcosanti, these faithful few perhaps already live Soleri's esthetogenetic life, transforming brass into bells and concrete into a city. By and large, however, they are young, transient, and enthusiastic residents of a place that lacks any economic or social function beyond demonstrating the possible truth of Soleri's imagination to a civilization that denies them daily in everything it does. Although its chambers of commerce are more than willing to promote visits to Arcosanti in hotel lobby flyers and travel magazine write-ups if it brings more visitors to experience the region's many anti-ecological life-styles, the state of Arizona also has done very little to advance Soleri's ideas.

The almost unreal ephemerality and wastefulness of everyday life in cities such as Phoenix are a strong boundary condition, constraining efforts to make something like Arcosanti from becoming real. With the informational revolution, many might even argue convincingly that Soleri's arcologies are obsolete technologies for advancing the urban effect. Given the new media, like cable television, mobile personal telephony, global satellite-based communication and personal computers, two-dimensional scatterized sprawl can emulate three-dimensional complexity — now even on a global level.[39] "Cybertectures" are displacing "architectures," dooming Soleri's arcological dreams to sink into the telematic rifts of transnational infostructures. If complexification can advance informatically, then why bother with material manifestations in architectural

39. See Tim Luke, "Informationalism and Ecology," in *Telos*, No. 56 (Summer 1983), pp. 59-73.

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megastructures? Miniaturization is better measured in bytes and gigaflops, not square meters or population densities. Soleri, of course, objects. In his mind, informationalization makes arcologies even more necessary and desirable. If informational technology is misapplied to the partial rationalization of scatterization, it will only postpone the collapse as it aggravates their consequences. Nonetheless, in some respects, informationalization does begin to sublate the arcological effect, enabling one to treat the entire planet — when it has many mature infostructures up and running at some point in the future — as one gigantic arcological megastructure on the informational plane.

For a totalitarian civilization that mystifies its totalitarianism in the ideologies of choice, liberation, and convenience, Soleri's urban experiment can be explained away as a communitarian nightmare: an environmentalist's ant-hill where no one can have a car, plant a lawn, or build their "own" house because the Master Builder as Founding Legislator has deemed them all to be evil. He is probably right, but this sort of right guy has been finishing last in modern industrial cultures for three hundred years.[40] At best, as a real estate enterprise, Arcosanti may only occupy another small niche in the immense food chain of Arizona's other consumer-segmented lifestyle villages, like Sun City and Green Valley for oldsters, Scottsdale and Oro Valley for transient yuppies, or Ahwatukee and Chandler for young families. For New Age ecological dreamers at the tail-end of the psychodemographic distribution, who might otherwise settle for a New Age 1960s aura in Bisbee or Jerome, Arizona also has Arcosanti. But as real estate, Arcosanti is also utterly illogical in the capitalist space economy of place valorization and devalorization. As a devotion to permanence, no current business categories can deal with it. Its

40. For a mix of these kinds of readings, see M. Basil Pennington, "Arcosanti Monastery No. 1," in *America*, No. 144 (March 14, 1981), pp. 207-209; "A Dream City or Ghost Town?," in *Newsweek*, No. 97 (March 23, 1981), p. 14; Naomi M. Bloom, "Paolo Soleri's Arcosanti," in *Science Digest* (March 1981), pp. 42-47; Susan Hazen-Hammond, "Mecca or Mirage?" in *Discovery* (Summer 1985); "A Pilgrimage to Acrosanti," in *Arthur Frommer's New World of Travel* (1988); Paul Weingarten, "Futuristic City: a Radical Vision Still Out of Focus," in *Chicago Tribune* (July 10, 1988); Leonard David, "Paolo Soleri: Man for All Seasons," in *Ad Astra*, No. 1 (November 1989), p. 31; Jane Dodds, "Paolo Soleri," in *Art in America*, No. 78 (November 1990), p. 201; John Poppy, "Home, Sweet Home, 2001-Style," in *Longevity* (May 1991), pp. 50-60; "Paolo Soleri's Arcology: Updating the Prognosis," in *Progressive Architecture* (March 1991); Mark Pastin, "For Selfish Reasons, Arizonans Should Look Again to Arcosanti," in *The Business Journal* (May 20, 1991); David W. Dunlap, "Future Metropolis," in *Omni*, No. 7 (October, 1984), pp. 116-124.

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projected horizon for economic life is off of the 10 to 50 year scale of amortization used in America to mortgage real estate. Compared to a city like Phoenix, where blocks and blocks of 1970s era dream houses already are turning into slums, Arcosanti is irrational. Arizona's entire political economy is based on rapid cycles of growth and decay, while Arcosanti is predicated on ripening slowly as a no-growth society.

In some ways, a Phoenix or a Los Angeles — in their full-blown 1945-1990 Cold War forms — typify the urban form in an era of thermonuclear confrontation. Spreading out from the ground zero of downtown government centers or central business districts, which lack any authentic "downtown" or "uptown" urban vitality, these urbanized conglomerations are thin accretions of impermanent structures operating under the menacing shadows of intense thermonuclear explosion. Lacking any civic center holding them together, such places have gained their social identity mainly in and from televisual images. Nightly news broadcasts, detailing the murders, ballgames and rainfall occurring within their borders create a sense of "the Valley of the Sun" or "L.A." but, for the most part, there still is "no there, there." Built around the high-technology industries used to construct the thermonuclear delivery systems of the federal state, Cold War anomie and superpower angst continuously deconstructed their community, reducing them to settled assemblies of megadeaths awaiting Soviet megatonnage that in the meantime provide the televisual settings for police state morality plays, like *Dragnet*, *CHIPS*, *Baywatch*, or *Cops*. In a sense, they are cities where the bomb already has dropped, leaving a uniformly drab collection of rubble where communities of isolated atomized people scurry from flimsy shelters to clogged streets to dilapidated commercial strips to abusive workplaces stretching for hundreds and hundreds of square miles. Only an H-bomb could destroy them, but perhaps only an H-bomb-centered political economy likewise could create such "urbanized" places without leaving hardly any semblance of a city within their "city limits."

At the same time, Arcosanti now is languishing because it does need a political economy to operate: an entire industry to sustain it, a real community to build it, a living society to maintain it by putting all their energies into its realization. While Soleri argues a city is essentially an informational construct, Arcosanti proves how limiting an informational economy can be, particularly if it has only two product-lines: windbells and tourism. Now, at best, it is a prophet's manor or a monastic order's

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abbey, but not a city.[41] Lacking more complex ties into many industries, most markets or more information, it cannot really become a city. It is only a house of ideas, and it may well become a ruin once the idea-man is gone. Something rising on the scale of Arcosanti really requires a corporate or state agency to raise the capital, labor and materials to make it operate, but under current conditions neither Arizona nor Soleri will allow this to happen. So in his own cosmogenetic terms, Soleri's city is simply a mineral structure lacking the biomental organism to sustain it. An intentional community of 50 or 60 has been created over twenty-five years to occupy it, but its spaces were planned to hold 5,000 or 6,000 people. To the extent that it has attracted only one percent of its ideal population, Arcosanti is a failure even as a monastic community.

The scale of a Soleri arcology reveals much about its inner contradictions. Cities are communities of people, cohabitating the same space and time. They typically start small and grow larger, although some have been planned to begin large and remain relatively stable (Reston, Virginia or Columbia, Maryland) or begin larger and become quite grand (Washington, Canberra, Brasilia, or New Delhi). Corporate capital and municipal law would be more than able to adapt to arcological criteria, if the popular desire for building such spaces could be created. However, the pictures of suburban domesticity vended to modern families for over a century militates against the images of arcological living proffered by Soleri. In fact, the rhetoric of its presentation is very monastic. Unfortunately, even for those few willing to listen, it is excessively monastical. The stale auras of a architectural student practicum, grad student poverty, or holier-than-thou frugality as the moral basis of life at Arcosanti are

41. The grip of a monastic allure in Soleri's thinking is quite strong. In *Technology and Cosmogenesis*, he writes: "One of the paradoxes of spirituality is that it is bound to (generated by) materiality and there, at the critical hinge of matter converting into spirit is Monakos. . . . Monakos, at least the Monakos, goes about the business of reality with a firm grip, at times a self-destructive vise, on body-and-soul. It is a quickening of the body in direct touch with the raw physical-physiological make-do; a quickening of the soul that is none other than the quickened body transcending the physiological splendor it embodies, the uninterrupted miracle of the self-transcending food chain. In this context of a spirituality locked in the sweat of the flesh, the techno-logy of evolution, I am going to elaborate on the environmental-architectural (arc-ology) work leading to Arcosanti and beyond," pp. 133-134. The practice of building Arcosanti, therefore, becomes for Soleri a "neomonastic proposition" to counterbalance material consumerism with mental transcendence. "To keep things in balance," he concludes, one can find in monastic models some important values, like "tradition, learning, intellectual rigor, humility, frugality, altruism, self-discipline and transcendence," which are things "not to dismiss nonchalantly," *Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?*, *op. cit.*, p. 77

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extremely alienating for the average consumer. It flashes back to 1960s counterculture communes left behind during "the revolution" rather than moving forward to the practical necessity of 1990s ecological realities.

Soleri's arcological speculations are an ecological manifesto, but would they work as planned? In them, Soleri is recoiling from the destruction of habitat caused by the growth of contemporary cities. His ant-hill cities have been maligned for their ant-hill qualities, but he really has changed only a couple of assumptions in urban design, moving, first, from automobile to pedestrian transport and, second, from building many ministructures to constructing a few megastructures. These changes, however, might not radically alter the city's ecological imprint on the countryside. A million people in an arcology may not be more ecologically viable, because a modern city is merely the material manifestation of many different global flows intersecting at one particular site. Soleri prematurely attributes many environmental problems to the shape of the city's architectural nexus with Nature — the city as material structure/real estate/geographical site. Much could change, and undoubtedly even be improved in arcologies of his design, but he is naive in believing that what exists now is not also an arcology — only of a highly deviant type. Destructive global flows of capital, labor, energy, material, and ideas might just as well, or even more easily, circulate through his arcological structures, altering only a few local ecologies and not significantly improve global environmental imbalances.[42]

Soleri's arcological designs also fly directly in the face of many contemporary environmentalists' notions of living in harmony with Nature. He openly admits that nine or ten billion people, or double the planet's current population, could inhabit the Earth, if only its urban infrastructure could be arcologized to fit his specifications.[43] This is not the picture of "sustainable ecological development" envisioned by most of today's greens. He also remains very eclectic about his proposed sites of construction. Building tremendous megastructures over undeveloped canyons, in river courses, or along cliff regions is not the aesthetic of frugality and appropriateness followed by deep ecology, ecofeminism or even social ecology. The public benefits of following Soleri's path to ecological frugality ultimately might prove to be very satisfying even to some radical ecologists, but his methods

42. For more discussion of these flows, see Robert Reich, *The Work of Nations: Preparing Ourselves for 21st-Century Capitalism* (New York: Knopf, 1989); and, David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

43. See Soleri, *Arcology: Architecture in the Image of Man*, *op. cit.*

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have inappropriate technology written all over them inasmuch as he calmly plans for a doubling in the Earth's population.

Arcosanti is not a complete arcology; it is at best a fragment of a future yet to come. In fact, many Arcosantis as greenplexes for ecologically inclined consumers could even be built within the current frameworks without even rippling most of its anti-ecological qualities. Only when scores of arcologies on the scale of Novanoah II (2,400.000 inhabitants), Babelnoah (population 6,000,000), or Logology (900,000 citizens) were being built all over the planet could the arcology be considered a working idea. By remaining trapped in the spiritualistic echo-chambers of 1960s consciousness-raising, Arcosanti has failed to anticipate many of the most significant global changes in the 1990s. Its New Age auras have eclipsed its inhabitants' abilities to adapt Arcosanti's ecological lessons to the new times of post-Fordist informationalism.

The political economy of Arcosanti today, then, is not tremendously political nor is it remarkably economic. Instead of building a city with many of its citizens already in place, this "urban laboratory" has become more of a rural retreat from the Sunbelt frenzy of Phoenix for Soleri and his co-workers. Sitting so close to I-17, a major north-south route from Phoenix to the Grand Canyon, Arcosanti is becoming just another roadside attraction, starring Soleri and his followers as the funky inhabitants of a bizarre living history village from the 1960s. Whereas Williamsburg features fragments of the past dressed up by the present as American history, Arcosanti presents fragments of a future that get dressed down by curious tourists from the present as a fascinating but failed expression of the Age of Aquarius. For twenty-five years, twenty-something drop outs have been casting windbells, baking organic muffins, leading instructional tours, or raising concrete walls at Arcosanti. Instead of creating his city, Soleri has established a neomonastic habitat. Like Williamsburg's tasteful simulation of English colonial life under the Hanoverian kings, Arcosanti too is an artful simulation, only it remains stuck upon memorializing what might have been had some of the Woodstock Nation taken power. It is a nice place to do workshops, as the frequent customers in its Elderhostel, silt casting seminar and New Age concert businesses prove. But most people would not want to live there. Thus it serves unwittingly as a vivid affirmation of everything that modern consumerism associates with the "small is beautiful" and "voluntary simplicity" philosophies of the 1960s — living at the dead-end of a dirt road in the desert amid the ruins of a commune to handicraft wind bells and print manifestos to sell to

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carloads of Japanese tourists.

Not surprisingly, the capital accumulation dynamics of this quasi-manorial economy are almost nil. Arcosanti's annual construction budget is about $200,000, much less than what Phoenix suburbanites will shell out for one single-family house down the road from Cosanti in Paradise Valley. Arizona's population has almost doubled from 1970 to 1995, but Arcosanti's 50 or 60 permanent residents are barely one percent of the 5,000 to 6,000 citizens Arcosanti was planned to be housing by now. The ecological credo of Arcosanti is the cause of this steady-state in its economy. Seventy miles south, Phoenix is a growth machine that has mushroomed from 150,000 people in 1945 to 3.5 million in 1995 by treating both architecture and environment as disposable personal commodities. Housing is the engine of its growth machine, because it is something tossed together in sixty days out of chip board, two-by-fours, and spray-on stucco on tiny lots jammed together near a golf course, playground or shopping mall. People live in it for five or six years, then resell it to move up and further out. Sold and resold for fifty or sixty years, it ends its economic life as a freeway teardown, in a barrio, or simply abandoned in the urban core. Huge amounts of water, electricity, and material resources are needed to keep this home habitable in Phoenix, all of which come from outside the Valley of the Sun at unsustainable rates. Still, there has been constant growth for five decades by reproducing the same cycles over and over. This new "sixth C," or construction, is what keeps the Arizona lifestyle rolling. Without it, the state becomes the backwater that it was before this political economy was invented in the 1940s —underpopulated, economically stagnant, and politically insignificant as it pursued the traditional "Five Cs" of citrus, cotton, cattle, climate and copper in a semi-Third World extractive economy.

If this growth machine is both Arizona and America, then Arcosanti is un-Arizonan and anti-American through and through. Something that lasts for generations, some place that is ecologically sustainable, some community that is rooted in the environment is not part of the contemporary lifestyle in Arizona or America. Soleri cannot succeed, because everything he regards as ecological failure in the particular society he inhabits is also the *sine qua non* of its irrational but real economic prosperity. Still, this stark juxtaposition of Phoenix and Arcosanti must be studied in great detail. It is one of today's quintessential confrontations of anti-ecology with ecology. From the opposition and antagonism of these competing urban forms, much can be learned.

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Conclusions

At the end of the day, Soleri and Arcosanti are a contradictory proposition. There is much to be discovered here among his theoretical insights as well as from his city's practical setbacks. Various ideologies and utopias freely intermingle in everything he has achieved. At first glance, Soleri's utopian arcologies often seem the wish-dreams of a civilization yet to be realized. However, they can also be seen as ideological fictions for stabilizing many myths in the present social order. These ideological qualities are the most vexing product of his work.

First and foremost, Arcosanti might be regarded as just another techno-fix for the problems plaguing contemporary industrial civilization. Even though it is dressed up in the garb of theological celebration, a Soleri arcology is a tremendous megamachine dedicated to rationalizing the metabolism of urban economies and societies by building bigger to last longer. Each arcology rests on a design for concentrating the production/consumption/circulation/administration of commodities in the bowels of an immense megastructure, while arraying the spaces for residences, schools, entertainments, and the arts on its top or along the exteriors, like some super luxury steamer permanently run aground on Earth. Thus, once again, rational design and logical construction on a gigantic scale by a world-historical genius are represented as the only path for the ecological salvation of society. Actually, this project has been stunted by being so closely held. It really needs to be opened up to popular feedback and community input to succeed.

Second, Arcosanti comes off as an architectural concretization of the vanguard schema of enlightened rule. Left to their own devices, the citizens of Arizona, America or the world apparently will accept a Phoenix, Los Angeles, Lagos, or Mexico City as their habitat. Regrettably, such urban forms are an ugly urban sprawl, polluted, disorderly, overpopulated, inefficient. To survive this chaos, Soleri intones, this civilization needs new leadership: rational enlightened visionary guidance from above. Missing a sacred element in its secular hustle for progress and fun, this civilization could also use a higher purpose, like enacting the cosmogenetic realization of some God-force in human history. In other words, Soleri's arcology occasionally smacks of some desert despotism, albeit virtuous and enlightened, but not terribly unlike those that have already crashed and burned elsewhere during the 20th century. The arcological project is not tremendously detailed, but what appears on paper already is highly overdetermined. The architect, as master builder, will dictate the shape and

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function of space down to the 1,000 to 2,000 square feet each family will receive.[44] There, and only there, like passengers on a ship or slaves on the plantation, might personal desires be accommodated and expressed. The thorny questions of real property law, private ownership of wealth, and public corporate organization, which are the material forces actually driving the contemporary city, are essentially ignored in this totalizing vision of ecological order. Inasmuch as legal and economic issues are neglected in Soleri's grand architectural design, one sees a major reason for its pathetic record as a working human settlement.

Third, Arcosanti could be dismissed as a true utopia — it is "nonplace" because it is no place. Plunked down in the middle of nowhere, with no industries, little arable land, few transportation links, minimal scenic attractions, and hardly any people, why would anyone want to live there? Everything about it, even if it was completed, signals that it is the negative antithesis of all that is, rightly or wrongly, regarded as life-affirming in the scatterized metroplex. You can lead millions of horses to this water, but very few of them will drink. Cosmogenesis in the Arizona desert will lose out every time when put up against plain old technogenesis in Houston, plutogenesis in New York City, or esthetogenesis in San Francisco. If Arcosanti did not exist, it might almost be necessary to invent it to reaffirm the virtues of the vices Soleri decries in cities like Phoenix and Los Angeles. The multiple myths of mobility, fun, pleasure, power, and convenience that contemporary consumerism thrives on are assuredly false promises, especially when viewed from an ecological perspective. Yet they are believed, so they become true; Arcosanti's misfortune, ironically, is to serve as tangible proof of the utopian alternative's undesirability by showing itself as an ideology based on immobility, labor, pain, powerlessness, and inconvenience.

The complexity and energy of the urban effect is real. Glimpses of it can be gained from midtown Manhattan, Chicago's Michigan Avenue, downtown Boston, or San Francisco's Market Street. However, most of these complex energies are generated by major corporations, large banks, and big governments. The arcological challenge is how to capture and concentrate these effects in more popular forms of municipal

44. For echoes of this vision of aesthetic dictatorship, see the writings of Soleri's American teacher, Frank Lloyd Wright, including his *An Organic Architecture: The Architecture of Democracy* (London: Lund, Humphries, 1939); *When Democracy Builds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945); and, *The Natural House* (New York: Horizon Press, 1954).

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commonwealth or urban communitarianism without succumbing to Soleri's utopian ecologism. Soleri professes to have no preconceived plans about how to organize the civic administration of his arcologies. Instead, he believes they are like pianos upon which almost any kind of music could be played by the societies that acquire them. This metaphor is alluring, but it overlooks how directly any arcology, like a piano, must express the collective values and personal tastes of those who invent and build it. It takes a complex society to build a piano, and only particular types of social individuals can, in turn, play highly complicated and varied kinds of music on this instrument. Thus far Arcosanti has failed as a city by not accounting for this essential civil element in its designs; not only must the piano be built, so too must players be trained, listeners educated, concertos composed, concert halls designed, and piano factories constructed for "piano playing" to succeed.

Fourth, in casting arcological invention as an anti-urban return to Nature, Soleri picks the fight (out of some sense of purity) that cannot be won and passes on the battles that must be won (on the basis of practicality) in the existing city. By presenting the arcological alternative as one more futurology for tomorrow, by setting his new megastructures into fantastic unspoiled bioregions, he ignores the possibilities for materially improving all of today's existing arcologies already failing their inhabitants now on site in large cities. Instead of reimagining urban infrastructures from the ground up on new unspoiled sites, why not push people toward thinking about arcologically retrofitting existing cities? Phoenix easily could become a series of smaller, interconnected arcological structures, allowing the desert, the river bottoms, or even the citrus groves it has annihilated with unchecked suburbia over the past five decades to return. Rather than avoiding real battles over contemporary styles of land use, shelter construction, property creation, habitat destruction, and urban culture by retreating to a utopia in the desert, why not join in the political struggle to redefine everyday life by pushing all existing scatterized arcologies to shed much of their irrationality in becoming more like Soleri's idealized concentrated arcologies? Over the past twenty-five years, huge malls and commercial projects occupying much more land than many of Soleri's designs have been built very rapidly in Phoenix. Indeed, large tracts of land from federal reassignments of property, failed commercial developments, or dead-and-gone 1950s shopping malls have become available for arcological experimentation in Phoenix. But these opportunities for real transformative experimentation with the structures of a

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thoroughly anti-ecological city have been lost for the lack of a Solerian arcological will, imagination, or desire.

Fifth, Soleri's fairly impoverished categories of critique chalk up the two-dimensional sprawl of a Phoenix, Los Angeles or Houston to the effects of one technology — the automobile. On one level, this analysis is correct, but remarkably incomplete. In fact, one might argue more effectively that these sorts of cities grew hand-in-hand with the development of the interventionist federal state during the Cold War era. The economies of these sunbelt urban sprawls was deeply embedded in the high-technology astronautical, aircraft, and electronics industries that rested at the heart of the Fordist American defense economy. Such cities also were made possible by federal subsidies to interstate highway construction for their transportation grids, hydroelectric dam construction, electricity and water supplies, cheap residential construction, housing stock and corporate agribusiness construction for their food and fiber needs. The automobile, air conditioning, and the mass media provided the requisite technologies to move people and goods, maintain climate-controlled habitats, and organize thoughts and desires of millions of people moving into such cities from all over the nation almost overnight to live and work in an entirely new form of urbanized space. Yet, like the national regime that made these urbanisms possible, these urbanized concentrations of population largely lack any real organic community, localistic particularity or democratic grounding. Such sprawls are simply temporary housings or transitory habitats for thousands of families moving from place to place by corporate directive or governmental design to sustain the federally-funded growth machines of the Cold War economy. Now, as the military goods once produced in helicopter plants, aircraft factories and missile installations in Phoenix, Los Angeles, and Houston are no longer in demand, and the federal largesse that built the dams, highways, and suburbs making such places possible is drying up, these two-dimensional cities face severe new challenges simply to survive.

The concentration of population and production in compact megastructures, as Soleri proposes, might well be a highly rational response to the post-Cold War political economy of flexible accumulation. Cities no longer can count on major subsidies from higher national authorities to pay for inefficient transportation systems, inhospitable housing tracts, and expensive water supply systems. To respond to the demands of global rather than national modes of high-technology production, cities will need compact, flexible, inexpensive spaces for offices and factories close to

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their population centers. Reducing everyday frictions caused by the urban sprawl, traffic gridlock, and social decay embedded in the automobile-based Cold War city's civil engineering systems and architecture will require radical innovations. Building variants of Soleri's arcological settlements might be a step toward adapting to the realities of the transnational economies of post-Fordism.

The isolated personalities and atomized families of Cold War era suburbia, however, do not foster the sort of social individuality needed to commit any individual's life or every family's fortunes to the permanent civic commitment of constructing an arcology. Yet a real communitarian alliance or an authentic popular commonwealth tied to similar communities through a genuinely federal form of self-government could launch the reconstruction of existing urban areas as ecologically-sound and architecturally-enduring arcologies. Arcologies require a new form of state, rooted in the practices of popular communal governance. Populist commonwealths might generate more rational relations of production and consumption more well-suited to constructing such arcological cities. In turn, the urban effects of these arcologies could charge new populist commonwealths with tremendous vitality and creativity.[45]

In spite of all these reservations, however, the positive utopian energies of Soleri's work should be acknowledged. Soleri must be praised for the innovative hints he provides to those now rethinking the dynamics of human ecology. Apart from the odd Teilhardian foundations of his reasoning, he calls for a reconceptualization of how extensive the human impact on the environment already has been. Arcologies already exist, but they work in scatterized, megalopolistic, inefficient forms, wasting energy, material, and lives in an on-going degradation of all human and non-human life on the planet.

Despite the fantastic qualities of many of Soleri's arcological proposals, there are workable ideas for communities of 2,000, 20,000 or even 200,000 inhabitants in his visionary designs. The first reaction of many to Soleri's ideas is disbelief: "it can't happen here," "too big, it won't work," "nothing like this can exist." But, some stand-alone megastructures, like the Pentagon, the World Trade Center, the Omni in Atlanta, or the many Galleria-type mega-malls rising all across North America, have been built by this society, even if the existing corporate relations of production often pervert them to fulfill essentially anti-ecological uses. Moreover, every

45. See Tim Luke, "Community and Ecology," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), 69-79

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existing urbanization in the world today is a failed three-dimensional arcology consumed by the crises of two-dimensional urban systems. Popular movements and/or existing communities could choose to follow arcological ideas, as Soleri has been testing them at Arcosanti, in new attempts to build a more ecological society. In the post-Cold War world, which apparently needs some new transcendent purpose for maintaining any focused collective action, building arcological cities could provide larger goals for successive generations of people. Getting the other 5,900 people that Soleri has needed for twenty-five years to set up house at Arcosanti might be a measure of progress for this one neomonastic complex. But mobilizing these thousands of arcological activists to build one, two, three, many Arcosantis elsewhere around the country would be immensely more important as the first steps toward developing an urban civilization for a new communitarian populism.

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Notes and Commentary:

Culture in the Conservative Revolution: The American Debate

Russell A. Berman

Whether the Republican victory in the November 1994 election will lead to the often invoked "revolution" remains to be seen. The pressures toward normalcy, "business as usual" and compromise are strong in Washington, and signs of a new moderation after the heat of the electoral campaign have begun to appear. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to assume that *plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose* will become the watchword in American politics. The terms and the tone of debate have shifted, ideological realignments are in the air, and previously marginal or even extreme positions are suddenly much closer to center stage. All this represents a challenge to conservatism as much as to the old Democratic orthodoxy. An influential columnist recently wrote that the turn of events shows that it took the American public 30 years to concede that Goldwater was right. That concession is nowhere more relevant than in the realm of culture.

A sharp political battle is already taking shape over the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), as well as its scholarly counterpart, the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The NEA is the sole significant vehicle for federal funding of the arts in the US, and with an annual budget of only $167 million — about a fourth of the arts budget in Berlin — it is a tiny drop in the Washington bucket. It is, however, a very important drop that will focus much of the conservative rage against the liberal regime.

Much of the NEA budget goes to mainstream organizations — symphonies and museums — or to leverage the $9 billion in private philanthropic giving to the arts, the real source of cultural funding in the US. Still, conservatives remain irritated by even small grants to artists whose works, decried as part of a marginal "counterculture," are viewed — correctly — as hostile to the traditional values of

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the electorate. Robert Mapplethorpe's photography with homosexual themes or Karen Finley's feminist performance art have been singled out for attack and effectively subjected to a populist criticism: why should the federal government fund artistic expression inimical to mainstream values? This argumentative twist allows conservatives to invoke a democratic self-righteousness, while the liberal defenders of aesthetic autonomy or the value of culture are portrayed as elitist. The difference between Left and Right begins to blur.

While value-conservatives deride the eccentricities of the counterculture, free-market conservatives question the wisdom of government involvement in the arts altogether. What role does the state have in culture anyhow, if one assumes that the market can resolve all questions on its own? Indeed, each statist step would appear to endanger freedom — including the freedom of the artist — as well as fostering an otherwise unsustainable cultural elite. There are in fact deep-seated differences between these two conservative strands, one interested in the defense of traditional values and the other in reducing the role of government, and they may come to blows over questions such as the reintroduction of prayer into public schools. But in the attack on the NEA, they are on the same side, insisting that the government cease supporting the arts. How very different is this American conservatism, hostile to the state and hostile to the elite, from the conservatisms of Europe which, since Burke, have always promoted the elite against the mob, and which, since Bismarck, have encouraged the state to regulate the harshness of the marketplace.

The turn against the state is, basically, the political program of a triumphant post-modernity, American style. While some of its more giddy and aestheticizing defenders have confused its significance, post-modernity has established itself as the end of modernity and its promises of linear progress, the priority of reason, and the universality of values. In other words, it is the coming-to-power of a radical skepticism toward the Enlightenment and its legacy. No one should be surprised, therefore, that the cultural terms of the conservative revolution include a revalorization of values which are called "premodern," and more simply "traditional": family, religion, community. That this shift has implications for gender roles in the post-feminist era goes without saying, and the debate around abortion is sure to be revived. Yet the retraction of the enlightenment framework for politics has even wider impact in the arena of race relations, since post-modernity quickly undercuts the old pathos of universalism. The 1994 election therefore marks the end, or the beginning of the end, of the policies of multiculturalism and affirmative action. Both in fact have had mixed impacts, and neither lacks a conservative side — multiculturalism is by definition anti-universalistic and affirmative action has produced a small, conservative elite in the minority communities — but they are both viewed primarily as liberal programs to promote an equality that, in the era of difference, is no longer presumed to be an *a priori desideratum*. This is the magnitude of the shift in the arena of values: in place of a federal gov-

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ernment acting as the vehicle of the Enlightenment in social and racial policy, we will see a government constantly struggling to grow smaller and without a fundamental commitment to achieving equality through intervention. The historical comparison that comes to mind is the end of Reconstruction in 1876.

In light of post-modernity's anxiety about centralized states and its preference for the local and the particular, the constitutional and legal underpinning of the political dispute has begun to change as well. Since the Vietnam era, the fundamental drama of American politics was played out in the struggle between the Presidency and Congress: from Watergate to Irangate and on. Suddenly that dynamic has resided, to be replaced by a growing tension between two pillars of the Constitution: the 10th amendment, the last of the Bill of Rights, protecting the rights of states against encroachments by the central government, and the 14th amendment, adopted after the Civil War, guaranteeing equality to all, especially the former slaves. The expansion of federal power in the 20th century depended on the force of the 14th amendment, and it was only the losers in the 1960s, the advocates of segregation, who insisted on "states' rights." A debate is beginning to unfold which threatens to reverse this priority, and surely not only because with Clinton, Gore, and Gingrich the South has taken over the Yankee capital. The issue is deeper, linked to the hesitancy about the validity of a militant Enlightenment or the blind enthusiasm for universalism: better the "*petits récits*" of the post-modern theoreticians, local traditions, and states' rights instead of imposed equality. So much for civil rights.

The consequences for domestic social policy are clear: less social welfare and a decentralization of what remains. The consequences for foreign policy are more difficult to predict, in part because the Republicans are much more divided among themselves on the question of the role of the US after the end of the Cold War. Old tensions between hawks and isolationists (nearly invisible since the Eisenhower era) are resurfacing. Some of this is driven by political maneuvering, to be sure, and some by concerns with the economic importance of military spending. Yet the changing terrain of policy debate is deeply influenced by a cultural turn in which the Enlightenment shibboleths of universality are no longer taken for granted. A Kantian utopia of an eternal peace makes little sense once the modern master narratives (e.g., the Cold War) have been replaced by perspectives that are either more sober and realistic or more particular and isolationist. In either of those cases, however, postmodernity might point toward a foreign policy characterized by a reluctance to intervene abroad (mirroring the resistance to interventionism domestically).

This renunciation of Enlightenment universalism may explain part of the unwillingness of the US to become engaged in Bosnia (as well as the embarrassing designation of the war against the civilian population in Chechnya as an "internal affair" of Russia). Without a narrative of progress pointing toward an all-encompassing eternal peace, there are no *a priori* grounds to oppose human

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rights abuses elsewhere, since even such rights are only meaningful in the context of a universalist ethics. In the 1860s, the US waged war against the Confederacy in the belief that slavery was wrong and in the name of a freedom deemed a universal good. In 1917, the US declared war on Germany in the name of democracy and eternal peace. Universalism implies intervention abroad; the end of universalism may mean a very different foreign policy.

The real situation in Bosnia is, of course, much worse, for the Enlightenment is already there in the form of the UN, which however — thanks to its own formalism and lack of will — has undermined whatever capacity the West still has to fight and produced little more than a managed genocide. One can hardly think of a clearer demonstration of the dialectic of enlightenment: the very best intentions of human rights, peace, and safety turn into their opposites. Can there be any wonder that the Enlightenment has lost its glow? The cultural turn that accompanied the recent election was a complex amalgamation of populist anti-statism, anti-elitism, traditionalism, and localism. The consequences for policy formation are yet to be seen and may be muffled by the American capacity for pragmatic solutions, but there should be no doubt that the liberal signposts of the last half century are no longer in place.

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Review:

Czech Philosophy and Culture at the Crossroads

Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, ed., *Good-bye Samizdat: Twenty Years of Czechoslovak Underground Writing* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1992), xxxi + 309 pp.

Miloslav Bednar & Michal Vejrazka, eds., *Traditions and Present Problems of Czech Political Culture: Czech Philosophical Studies I* (Bucharest, Romania & Washington, DC: PIDEIA Publishers & The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1994), 194 pp.

For twenty years, following the 1968 Soviet invasion and the ensuing "normalization," Czech civilization: philosophy, literature, art, theatre, music, and journalism had to go underground. Few things of value could be taught, printed, exhibited, or produced officially. Previously, during the 1960s, mostly the late 1960s, following political liberalization and greater tolerance, there was a window of opportunity for almost real university education, for non-communists to be educated and graduate from institutes of higher learning, for good literature to be written and published, for non-Marxist philosophy to be published, for non-socialist realistic art to be exhibited, for absurd theater such as Vaclav Havel's to be performed, and for some critical and non-ideological journalism. This mini-cultural renaissance was the achievement of a generation composed mostly of people who already matured under communism, in the post-Stalinist years from the late 1950s to the late 1960s. This generation of writers and artists did not start necessarily as anticommunists. Indeed, many of them were the "golden-boys" of communism, the bright village boys with the sturdy working-class backgrounds who could be brought to Prague, given an education, and be expected to become the new educated

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elite of communist Czechoslovakia. Havel, who has a rich bourgeois background, is the exception rather than the rule. However, once people are given education and some material security, they long for that other commodity, more elusive and rare, *freedom*.

In the late 1960s, most of the independent writers and artists centered around the first and only explicitly non-communist journal, *Tvar* (Face), founded by Havel and friends.[1] All this came to an end after the Soviet invasion. Gradually, Czech culture was smothered. By 1970, the division between official pseudo-culture and underground culture was all but complete. During the twenty years that followed, books by forbidden authors could be published only in *samizdat* or abroad, mostly in Canada or Germany, and forbidden performing arts could be performed only underground or abroad. Under these conditions it was very difficult for younger new writers and artists to have their "break." The 1960s generation and the older generation that matured before WWII but neither emigrated nor perished in that war, nor in the purges of the 1950s, dominated the underground scene. Today, though a new "twenty-something" generation of writers and artists is growing, the sixties generation is still dominant.

After 1970, independent intellectuals who did not emigrate, worked mostly in various manual jobs, continuing to be creative mostly underground. Other intellectuals, able to make some compromise with the regime, ended up in the Academy of Science in Prague. In most Western countries, the National Academy is the most selective academic institute, honoring the most revered scholars. In communist Czechoslovakia the number of members of the academy was inflated by two groups of people. Some scholars were in the grey zone, neither out-of-the-closet dissidents, who signed Charter 77, not yet regarded by communist authorities reliable enough to influence young minds in universities (e.g., Klaus). Jirina Siklova has analyzed perceptively and even prophetically how the residents of the grey zone would become the new professional elites of the Czech and Slovak republics after the fall of communism in *Good Bye Samizdat*. Then there were some thousands of intellectually incompetent communists, rewarded by steady income from the state for being reliable idiots. Following the 1989 revolution, the government has been trying to get rid of the communist incompetents through a policy of drastically reducing the number of academy

1. Incidentally, this is where Havel and Klaus met, before they became political allies and later rivals, following the November 1989 revolution. Klaus, then in his late twenties, sported a beard and a long scarf, and was a member of the "Bohemian" society that flourished around *Tvar*. He contributed some articles about economics.

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members. Despite this, and the addition of former dissidents as academy members, there are still some professionally incompetent members of the academy. In the communist period, the number of university teachers was (and still is) limited by the low ratio of students per population, due to government policy to limit the number of students far below demand, especially in the humanities and the social sciences. Some university teachers were professionals, others were collaborators, still others were communist incompetents (mostly in humanities and social sciences departments).[2]

The division between the "white-dissident" zone, and the grey zone became increasingly clear in 1977, following the founding of Charter 77. Those who signed Charter 77 were out-of-the-closet dissidents, by definition. After 1977, most of the underground cultural activity, mostly surrounding *samizdat*, was carried on by Charter 77 signatories. Only very few authors, like Hrabal, were able to be on both sides of the fence and have their books appear simultaneously in two editions, one official and censored, one unabridged in *samizdat*. The anthology edited by Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz, a Czech emigre teaching in Vancouver, Canada, attempts something impossible, to present a selection of the best highlights of twenty years of Czechoslovak civilization. This is a tasty smorgasbord that should tempt the appetite of Anglophone publishers and readers to translate, publish, and read the tomes of Czechoslovak culture in *samizdat*. The anthology edited by Bednar and Vejrazka, members of the Academy of Science, is representative of the intellectual climate in the Academy a few years ago.

Good-Bye, Samizdat is divided into three sections containing selections of some of the greatest authors in *samizdat* literature, culture, and philosophy. Czechoslovak literature has been far luckier in the West than Czechoslovak culture and philosophy. The works of many of the authors of fiction (Hrabal, Klima, Kohout, etc.) have already been published in English translation. Still, some of the best authors represented in the anthology, such as Egon Bondy (pseudonym of Zbynek Fiser) and the Slovak writer Dominik Tatarka, are relatively unknown in the West. For reasons of space, the literary section of the anthology had to include only short stories and *feuilleton*. This must have been a challenge for the editors because Czechs generally write better novels than short stories. Still,

2. This situation led to much corruption. Each Czechoslovak was required to have a stamp in his/ her identity card certifying their vocation from their place of work, institute of higher education, etc. Otherwise, they were guilty of parasitism. The average bribe for admittance to Prague's Charles University was about 30,000 crowns, more than an average year's salary. Still, it was cheaper than the fees demanded by the *cartel* of American universities that controls the academic market.

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Bondy's excellent short story and those of Kohout and Klima give some idea of that thin sense of irony and sarcasm mixed with some sentimentality and love of the absurd of which Czech writers are so fond.[3]

It is striking to note the dominance of philosophy in Czech underground culture. Many of the articles in the "culture" section of newspapers are actually philosophical. Some of the fiction authors have also been part-time philosophers. This is partly a matter of cultural attitude. As Patocka put it, "political reality and philosophical understanding of existence in its entirety must be in mutual agreement — because they are basically identical. . . "[4] It means that a political critique is formulated in philosophical terms, while philosophy is expected to have political implications. Developments in both philosophy and politics are considered historical, while historical changes are interpreted as philosophical and political. The philosophical attitude was also a matter of the social conditions of the dissidents. It was practically impossible to do any empirical research, and the immediate social-political environment was hostile and uninviting. Under such conditions, it is only natural to turn inward. As Havel put it, life under totalitarian rule had given the Czechs and the Slovaks something positive: "a special capacity to look, from time to time, somewhat further than someone who has not undergone this bitter experience. A person who cannot move and live a somewhat normal life because he is pinned under a boulder has more time to think about his hopes than someone who has nothing and therefore has nothing to offer in return."[5]

Most of this philosophizing was carried out within the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology seemed the critical alternative to Marxism, scientism and materialism, and it had a formidable local representative in the figure of Jan Patocka.[6] The traditional second language of most Czechs was the language of the Moravian-born Husserl, and the Czech Republic borders on Germany and Austria. Still, it is important to

3. Someday it would be interesting to see in translation the novels of Karol Sidon, currently the Rabbi of Prague, which he wrote *before* his religious conversion.

4. Jan Patocka, "An Attempt at a Czech National Philosophy and its Failure" (the first of two studies of Masaryk from 1976), tr. by Mark Suino, in Milic Capek et al., eds., *T. G. Masaryk in Perspective*, (Ann Arbor, MI: SVU Press, 1981), p. 4.

5. Vaclav Havel, "Help the Soviet Union on its Road to Democracy: Consciousness Precedes Being, Speech Delivered to the Joint Session of Congress, Washington D.C., February 21, 1990," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. LVI, No. 11 (March 15, 1990), p. 330.

6. On Patocka and the intellectual climate in Prague before WWII, see: Karl Schuhmann, "Husserl et Patocka," *Les Cahiers de Philosophie*, 11-12 (1992), pp. 93-102 and Petr Rezek, "La 'Phenomenologie de l'Espirit' de Patocka dans le Contexte du Cercle Philosophique de Prague," *Ibid*, pp. 103-115.

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note that this is a new development. Before WWII, the dominant philosophical traditions were German idealism, positivism, and vitalism. Havel, in his speeches, Kohak in his introduction to the philosophy section in *Good-Bye, Samizdat*, and Miloslav Bednar, in his article in the anthology he coedited, argue that there is a Czech intellectual tradition stretching from Jan Hus or Comenius, through Palacky and Masaryk, to Patocka and Havel. In Kohak's opinion, the Czech tradition is characterized by the rejection of the Cartesian distinction between *res cogito* and *res extensa* long before Descartes. This, however, is a totally anachronistic, post-*Cartesian Meditations* reading of Czech intellectual history. Patocka attacked most strongly nationalist myths that invent an intellectual continuity where none exists. He called it "Czech historicism." Patocka argued against Palacky and Masaryk's linear continuous interpretation of Czech history, which he termed "Czech Historicism" — the mythical belief that a progression of certain Czech national characteristics can be traced uninterrupted from time immemorial to the present. He argued most strongly that the modern Czech nation was created in the late 18th century through the emancipation of the serfs, and was not continuous with the Hus or Comenius, with the Protestants of the 15th and 17th centuries. Palacky saw the task of historiography to renew the self-consciousness of the nation by presenting the cultural achievements of its past, its bequest for the future. Masaryk was attracted by Palacky's Czech Historicism, posing mythical continuity of ancient and modern Czech democracy, theism and moral rationalism. Patocka thought in 1969 that Palacky and Masaryk's Czech Historicism was born of the needs of the liberated Czech-speaking populations in the Habsburg empire. Its time has passed along with such an ideological need. Continuity in Czech history is only a myth of nationalist intellectuals.[7]

In his *Two Studies on Masaryk*, Patocka criticized censoriously Masaryk's objectivist misunderstanding of the crisis of modernity, his lack of sophistication, his historically blind positivism, and his ignorance. In Patocka's opinion, Masaryk did not understand the ontological crisis of religion following the Kantian critique, partially because Masaryk did not read the relevant literature, and partially because he was a shallow thinker. According to Masaryk, the crisis of modernity is "subjectivism," i.e., the destruction of the belief in objective ideal of moral retribution and reward, of a moral God. Masaryk's solution for the crisis of modernity

7. Jan Patocka, "La Philosophie de l'Histoire Tcheque," in *L'Idee de l'Europe en Bohême*, (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1991), trans. Erika Abrams, pp. 115-132.

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was greater objectivity, maintaining an equilibrium between the subject and its objective destiny. At the end of his career Masaryk interpreted WWI as a World Revolution, the suicidal-homicidal subjectivist-titanist tendency extending through violent objectification, caused by the weakening of morality out of loss of faith. For Masaryk religion was the theoretical and practical solution to the lived problem of eternity. In Patocka's opinion, Masaryk did not really understand that Kant's critique of rational theology necessitated a turn toward moral theology. Patocka found the thesis about the relation between modern subjectivism and suicide through destruction of belief in eternity to be unsubstantiated. In his opinion, Dostoyevsky's discussion of the crisis of religion and modernity in *The Brothers Karamazov* (which Patocka interpreted through Heideggerian ontology) is far superior to Masaryk. In Patocka's opinion Nietzsche's nihilistic interpretation of Christianity is also far superior to Masaryk's. Nietzsche and Masaryk agree that Christianity supports life, Masaryk as a humanist love of the weak, Nietzsche, as destruction of the different. But for the Heideggerian Patocka, the crisis began with Plato and Christianity, with metaphysics, the projection of human desires on a durable and ideal world beyond this world. Patocka criticized Masaryk's acceptance of Comte's positivist and determinist progressive philosophy of history, assuming necessary revolutionary transfer from theocracy to democracy. Masaryk perceived WWI as a world revolution. The American participation in WWI made it a world war between democracy and theocracy. Masaryk perceived the creation of Czechoslovakia part of this world revolution. Patocka criticized Masaryk's metaphysical inconsistencies, juxtaposing positivism and naturalism with religious humanism, responsibility and freedom. Masaryk's positivist expectations that the world crisis ended with the victory of democracy and the extension of the world historical realm to include the Czech lands were falsified. In Patocka's opinion, Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism and will to power, and his prediction of two centuries of wars made him, rather than Masaryk, the philosopher of our times.[8]

Czech phenomenology, however, tends to differ from its German counterpart. It is more humane and humanist, less serious, fond of absurdities and mysteries. These characteristics go back to the writings of the idealist philosopher Ladislav Klima in the earlier part of this century, and

8. Jan Patocka, *La Crise Du Sens*, trans. Erica Abrams, (Brussels: Ousia, 1985). On contemporary reevaluations of Masaryk's tradition in Prague, see Caroline Bayard, "The Changing Character of the Prague Intelligentsia," *Telos* 94, pp. 131-144.

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continue today. Even *samizdat* philosophers who were not explicitly phenomenologists, display these characteristics. For example, in *Good-Bye Samizdat* there is a dialogue between Sidonius (pseudonym of Zdenek Neubauer, a philosopher of science, currently head of the department of philosophy of science at Charles University in Prague) and Sakateka (pseudonym of Ivan Havel, a philosopher with interest in cognitive science who has a PhD in computer science from Berkeley, today head of the Center for Theoretical Study). They discuss issues such as the nature of questions and explanations. But the style of the dialogue is something between Plato and Becket, and there is ample discussion of existence and essence, and above all, love and celebration of the mystery of being. Such a dialogue could never take place among academic "philosophers of science" or "cognitive scientists." In another article, Ivan Havel discusses philosophy of science, again from this viewpoint. He criticizes modern science for assuming an impartial "objective" scientific subject (in this he is in tune with contemporary philosophy of science). After admitting that he once believed in the ideals of modern science, he expresses interest in "paradoxes, metaphors, and other magic as means of cognition." He argues for plurality in modes of cognition, admitting the legitimacy of non-scientific modes of cognition such as mysticism, concluding that "modern science has forgotten how to breathe."

Of the various contributions to philosophy, the one nearest to Western contemporary concerns is the analysis of totalitarian discourse, undertaken by literary critics, linguists, and philosophers. In *Good Bye. Samizdat*, this is represented by a perceptive and rigorously documented essay by Fidelius (pseudonym of Karel Palek, today editor of the quarterly *Kritický Sbornik*) about communist language and rhetoric during *perestroika*. Jan Lopatka, who contributed to the anthology an essay about Hrabal, wrote in *samizdat* an excellent book about communist radio plays (the book has recently been reissued with a commercial publishing house in Prague). Fidelius discovered several principles of communist quasi-philosophical rhetoric: the principle of *nuclear reduction*, "allowing a whole to be reduced to its nucleus without changing the thing's quality (essence)." For example, "the people" are reduced to the nucleus of "the working class," "the party" and its "healthy core," finally to "the leader." The essential quality is preserved through these reductions. The principle of *the big hatchet*, permitting "an equivocal heterogeneous whole to be split into two mutually exclusive, unequivocal, and homogenous parts." For example, the division of the world into two diametrically opposed

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political blocs and classes that are incommensurable and cannot and should not attempt to communicate. Through this dialectical division, each half may be manipulated independently and be disconnected from its complementary half. Fidelius' analysis of communist discourse may be applied with some success to some contemporary Western political and academic discourses as well. . .

Kohak emphasizes correctly the *non-academic* nature of *samizdat* philosophy. However, while it was more in touch with social reality than Western philosophy, as Paul Wilson notes in his introduction, Czech dissidents were isolated from the West and from modern developments. In his article, Kusy noted the social, economic, and mutual intellectual isolation of the countries of the former Soviet bloc. In this collection, Czech philosophers are likely to be better educated in the classics, in languages, and in the history of philosophy than their Western counterparts. Still, they are mostly ignorant of what has been happening in philosophy since WWII. The great enemies are Comte and Marx, who for some reason represent for the Czechs rationality and science. Then, their challenge is answered by Brentano, Husserl, Heidegger and Patocka. Virtually all the articles in this representative anthology are developments or interpretations of Patocka's philosophy. The last non-Czech authors to receive some attention are Jung, Arendt, and Ricoeur. This relative intellectual isolation has not improved dramatically since the Velvet Revolution.[9]

The anthology edited by Bednar and Vejrazka promises to be the first in a series of studies in Czech philosophy. This blessed enterprise is undertaken by The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy (the effort is directed by George McLean from Catholic University in Washington, DC), which publishes comparable series in other Central and Eastern European national philosophies. This first volume is of a very mixed quality. Some of the articles are in sociology and history, others in philosophy. Some articles are more original, others not. Some articles are Marxist apologies, some by people who do not work anymore in the national academy. The

9. The hard-cover edition of *Good-Bye Samizdat* displays, in gold letters on the brown cover, below the title, "with a foreword by Timothy Garton Ash." This is repeated as part of the title in the Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data. Now I have little doubt that had Garton Ash chosen to write a substantive foreword to this anthology, he could have done a very good job. However, he did not. The substantial, important, and interesting introduction is by the editor, Marketa Goetz-Stankiewicz. The much anticipated foreword is really an extended blurb. It adds nothing. Garton Ash has sold some books and it is understandable that the publishers would want to use his name to sell the book. But this over-emphasis of the half page by Garton Ash misleads the readers.

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last section (with articles by Bednar, Radim Bures, and Vejrazdka) is more interesting, attempting to reflect on the characteristics of Czech philosophy, national character, and art through analysis of their historical development. Bednar attempts to trace the tradition of moral politics from Plato through Comenius and Masaryk to Patocka and the 1989 revolution. His interpretation of Patocka's moral politics is very interesting, but stronger on the connection between Plato and Patocka than on establishing a substantial philosophical tradition connecting Masaryk and Patocka.

Where is Czech philosophy going? Since the revolution, people have been able to read whatever they wanted. Many *samizdat* editions have been republished. In addition, there is a library of *samizdat* in Prague open to the public. Still, the communists' political censorship has given way to the economic pressures of the market. To be sure, there are many new, small, and flourishing private publishing houses that publish many good things (and many not so good). But they have an aversion to publishing long and expensive books. Even when recent philosophers appear in translation (e.g., Gadamer, Ricoeur, Arendt, or Levinas), the translations are collections of minor short essays or abridged editions of their important works. The Czech reader is still not familiar with much of what has been happening in philosophy recently. Further, the philosophers that "sell" (Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Husserl, Heidegger, Jung, and Patocka), present their readers with a certain view of the world. Unlike in Poland, there is no alternative in translation. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that university and municipal libraries buy almost no books or journals printed in the West. As a result, the libraries are not updated beyond the 1930s. Throughout the political changes, the government policy regarding spending money on buying books and journals in the West has not changed. As a result, without some access to Western resources, it is very difficult to work on current issues.

Still, its relative isolation may have provided Czech philosophy with one advantage: it missed the linguistic turns, and thus emerges from the shadows at a time when Western philosophy is itself turning its attention away from language and toward the world. Thus, there may be hope for Czech philosophy in building on Patocka's phenomenology and attempting to synthesize it with non-linguistic contemporary Western philosophy. Some attempts in creating a synthesis between phenomenology and contemporary philosophy of mind and cognitive science are undertaken in Ivan Havel's Center for Theoretical Studies.

Aviezer Tucker

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Sociology as Paradox

Irving Louis Horowitz, *The Decomposition of Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Ambiguity lies deep within the heart of this book. It is not, however, an ambiguity used as a literary device to express the complexity of things but rather an ambiguity about the author's intentions and desires. The reader cannot tell whether the author is talking about sociology, social action, political theory or politics. He cannot but wonder why the result of Jews in sociology is Jewish sociology. And, although the author's noble objective is actually to revive sociology, the title itself betrays the ambiguity to follow.

Half the book is about the purported coming apart of sociology, which the author regards as a living body. Such bodies decompose when they die. They do not deconstruct (as the current fashion would have it). Thus, in the *Phaedo*, Plato used that metaphor for the theory of death he ascribes to Simmias, according to which the soul (the principle of life) is the harmony of the body and death its decomposition. "Decomposition" distinguishes a living entity from an artificial one. The use of "decomposition" instead of "deconstruction" is an apt designation.

Horowitz seems to believe that, although decompos*ing*, sociology has not decomposed *yet* and probably will not, since the second half of the book is devoted to "The Reconstruction of Social Science." This, however, is a regression to a usage at odds with the earlier terminology. "Reconstruction" is a mechanical category belonging to the vocabulary of those deconstructionists Horowitz allegedly deplores. Slippages of this kind are distracting.

The John Ryle opening quotation prefigures the book's main concerns which, however, are immediately contradicted: "Science and conscience cannot in the future be permitted to develop in detachment" (7). This is a rejection of the fact-value dualism and constitutes the book's strength. In fact, the scientific quest itself is a value and the sociologist's claim to treat all societies alike is already a value judgment.[1] While Horowitz does not mind the marriage of the theoretical and the practical, combining them leads precisely to that politicization which has

1. Horowitz's critique of positivistism follows from this (18, 141-142ff). Thus, his treatment of James Coleman is devastating. Coleman continues to believe that the purpose of social science is to gather facts, present them, and let the chips fall where they may (104). According to Horowitz, he is naive and credulous about "an Enlightenment canon of objectivity" (104). The problem with this "scientific naturalism" and "objectivity," however, is only that they do not deliver the sociological goods. Both Coleman and Horowitz want sociology to be more than a scientific inquiry, to do social work and to provide advice. Horowitz recognizes it in Coleman and reproves him for failing to deliver on a new social science able to transform society (114).

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led to the splintering off of the social sciences from their substance and to the departure of scholars into newer disciplines at the service of policy planners "interested in piecemeal reform" (13). Consequently, Horowitz claims to be opposed to politicization: "My purpose is to call the discipline back to its first principles by a critique of the politicization of American sociology, a process even more exaggerated and corrupt than the situation during the first two decades of the century in German university life. . . " (22-23).

The second chapter of the book bears the title "Disenthralling Sociology" and seeks to free it from both ultra-leftist and ultra-conservative enthrallers. Horowitz' criticism of the Left's obsession with race, gender, and class does not lead him to join the conservatives whose "rage for order" and "faith in tradition" keeps them "at loggerheads with the practice of social analysis" (37). Having established a fashionable neutrality — a dubious one in the age of the culture wars and in terms of his own concerns about the vitality of the social sciences — Horowitz tries to vindicate "the supremacy of sociological explanation over all forms of ideological explanation" (39). Here he means the ideologies which make race, gender, age, occupation, ethnicity, religion, etc. the central variables. He seems to regard sociology the way philosophy was regarded before the natural sciences "liberated" themselves from it in the17th and 18th centuries — as inquiry into first principles. His concluding paragraph turns the social sciences into a *mathesis universalis*. "In their rich variety the social sciences offer a common language of discourse, logic, and method. They provide a beacon of rational light in a world still largely blanketed by ideological darkness" (252). The return to first principles, however, must begin with the recognition that current social science is grounded in particular values — something which rules out objectivity and universality. Horowitz denies that this predicament obliterates objectivity. Thus he does not see sociology as a managerial ideology supported by the state and meant to provide the kind of steering mechanisms necessary for effective manipulation. This is also why he fails to see the decomposition of sociology as related to the disintegration of the Welfare State and its fate tied to that particular form of political organization.

In the chapter on "Fascism, Communism, and Social Theory," Horowitz discusses how 20th century totalitarian systems affected sociology. He speaks seriously of "left-wing fascism" and "right-wing communism" and claims that "[w]ith the exception of a small handful of courageous figures, sociologists managed to go through the entire cycle of 1945-91 without producing a body of comparative analysis of democratic and totalitarian social structures"[2] (52). In other

2. One of the courageous exceptions turns out to be Louis Feuer who, according to Horowitz, disengaged radical rhetoric from totalitarian reality. Yet Feuer, he says, remains committed to Marxism as the language of the rebirth of freedom in Eastern Europe and Asia (53). There is no mention of, e.g., Alvin W. Gouldner, who wrote extensively on the crisis of sociology or C. W. Mills, concerning whom, however, Horowitz has written another book.

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words, sociologists have missed the boat.

As for the ideological roots of conservatism, they are partially located in the attempt to reconcile two opposed attitudes toward life: the heroic and the moral, the former associated with self-expression, the latter with self-denial (54). Conservatives such as the Southern Agrarians might find this Nietzschean cast of the heroic and the moral (and the branding of the opposition between the two as conservatism) highly dubious. According to the traditional understanding of heroism, it is the moral raised to a higher order. At any rate, the main points of the chapter are the weaknesses of both Right and Left.[3]

Although decidedly not Christian, the Left too has "a strong element of racism and anti-Semitism. . . cleverly rendered by a 'dialectical' pitting of Jews against blacks in archetypal terms." "Anti-Semitism," concludes Horowitz, "is the cement providing a crossover from right to left in terms of both ideology and personnel" (69).This is clearly nonsense, since the quarrels between Blacks and Jews are only a couple of decades old, dating back to the decomposition of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s-early 1970s.

The title of the fifth chapter looks like a category mistake. How does one go "from socialism to sociology"? One might go from socialism to capitalism or from psychology to sociology but from socialism to sociology is a transition from one logical type to another. What Horowitz is really concerned with is the journey of socialist Jewish scholars into sociology and the qualities they bring to the discipline: at "the core of the relationship of Jews and sociology is their connection to society as such" (78). Allegedly Jews "prosper only in the presence of two conditions: political freedom and economic laissez-faire" (78). They "fare well when there is no state religion" (86). This is clearly an overstatement. But what if the state religion is Judaism? Why should Jews not prosper under their own state religion? If religious pluralism (which is tantamount to secular pluralism) places limits on state control, then a state which is religiously plural or secular would be better for Jews than a Jewish state. Horowitz' answer is predictable: "Sociology as an option to socialism [category mistake again?] nonetheless presented itself also as an option to Judaism in particular, and to a suppression of the ethnic factor generally" (87). Here confusion is inescapable. Judaism as the most particular of all religions is clearly gone for Jewish sociologists or socialists who have obviously opted for universality. The ethnic dimension remains only as a residue for the Jewish sociologist. If so, why talk about "Jewish" sociologists at all?

Horowitz concludes his discussion on Jews, the journey to sociology and

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3. Alluding to Charles Lindbergh and Alexsandr Solzhenitsyn he says that "[w]e cannot ignore the dangerous imbalance of so many conservatives in their rather tepid response to Nazism and the Holocaust in contrast to their impassioned response to communism and Babi Yar" (55). As for the Frankfurt School, especially Theodor W. Adorno's work, Horowitz sees it as "an elitist vision of the world" which accepts socialism as an abstraction but rejects socialist practice (64).

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anti-Semitism by observing that "it is a matter of historical irony that a profession mired in genteel right-wing anti-Semitism at the beginning of the century should now find itself enmeshed in a far more acerbic left-oriented anti-Semitism" (92). Moreover, the Jew's fate becomes identified with the fate of sociology: "What is first perceived as a struggle over the place of Israel, Zion, or Jews in world politics, and then a struggle over multiculturalism, turns out struggle over the preservation and protection of the science of sociology from the ideology of racism" (92). The question of Israel as a Jewish state becomes lost in this account, along with the relation of the Jewish state and the rekindling of anti-Semitism, or the vindication of particularisms within a universalist framework which does not and cannot recognize any. At any rate, Horowitz's discussion of Jews and sociology mystifies both, in a presentation in which "Jewish sociology" can appear only as an oxymoron.

The issue of Jews in sociology and Jewish sociology has had a history not always exemplary. The Nazis spoke of Jewish physics and the Stalinists spoke of bourgeois science with the Jews in mind. Horowitz should have clarified how his account differs from theirs aside from the fact that he thinks that it is a good thing. He must be aware of this problem, since he criticizes "Aryan science" (162). The connection of ethnicity with science makes no sense since ethnicity as well as ideology and public policy (93-102) entails "the forfeiture of the independent claims and status of the discipline of sociology as a sphere of knowledge" (102).

Sociology's treatment of genocide, particularly the Holocaust, is the topic of chapter 10. Horowitz closely examines Emil Fackenheim's account of the uniqueness of the Holocaust *vis-à-vis* other similar events and finds it unsatisfactory, even contradictory (154). He believes that "[w]hether they are Japanese, Ugandans, Gypsies, Cambodians, Armenians, or Jews, their common humanity makes possible a common intellectual understanding. Insistence upon separatism (that the crime was Jewish existence — and this makes the Jewish situation different from any other slaughter, whatever its roots) contains a dangerous element of mystification. It is a variation of the belief in 'chosenness,' converting it from chosen to live God's commandments into chosen for destruction. This approach is dangerously misanthropic. It misses the point that being chosen for life may be a unique Jewish mission but being selected for death is common to many peoples and societies" (154-155). This is an old issue. For example, Stephen Katz has been studying the matter for years and claims that the Nazi attack on Jews was the only true genocide in history, since it was the only systematic attempt to kill all members of a group of people simply because they had been born. For Horowitz, the essence of the Jewish problem for Nazism was "the Jew as a political actor and beyond that, the Jew as a cosmopolitan, universalistic figure in contrast to fascist concepts based on nationalism, statism, and particularism" (155). But Zionism itself was nationalist, statist and particularist. Accordingly, it could fit well within an enlightened fascism. As for the assimilated Jew

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— whether in sociology or as a socialist — the "Jewish" dimension becomes irrelevant. Adorno and Horkheimer may have been closer to the mark when they claimed that the Jews were only accidentally the victims of the Holocaust. It could have been anybody in a strategy of forced homogenization.

Aware that he may be reversing his own view on the uniqueness of the Holocaust, Horowitz notes that there are qualitative differences between it and any other act of genocide: (1) the systematic character of the Holocaust (2) the ideological fervor with which it was carried out, and (3) its having been predicated on a national model of state power (161). His paradoxical discussion of the uniqueness of the Holocaust exemplifies his general approach to the social sciences. He devotes a whole chapter to the issue (Chapter 12).[4]

The issue of paradox finds its way into a chapter devoted to breaking down the dualism of foreign and domestic policy. The paradox of policy is that in order to get beyond polarity, social science must assume a Kantian moral imperative. Horowitz takes Kant's moral universalism and wishes to deploy it as a basis for universal social policy. Then he opens the very next chapter with the sentence: "The identification of social science with social advocacy has reached such pandemic proportions in American sociology that it is time, indeed the time is long overdue, to step back from the precipice of partisanship if the worth of serious analysis is itself to be preserved" (183). It is difficult to see how partisanship and social advocacy can be avoided if a morally universal science is to be the basis of social policy. This may be asking more of paradox than it can bear. Horowitz states emphatically that "[p]aradox is the essence of the social-scientific standpoint" and then adds a reassurance that "by no means is acceptance of paradox a surrender to confusion and subjectivism" (186). It may actually be worse. It may have to do with a failure to understand that paradox is to be resolved.

What Horowitz takes as paradox in the course of the chapter are quandaries and dilemmas rather than paradoxes as, for example, in his discussion of conflicting rights (191). Aside from this, there is the glaring "paradox" in the introduction to a book titled *The Decomposition of Sociology* where he says: "As I state repeatedly and with absolute conviction, the condition of social science in America has never been healthier"(5).

Nino Langiulli

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4. Concerning the Holocaust, however, he should have been more clear. He could have explored, e.g., Rabbi Eli Hecht's criticism of Holocaust preoccupations as part of the culture of complaint and victimhood which Hecht believes is psychologically and morally harmful to Jews. Or he might have discussed the attempted genocide as a failure except as a negative moment in world history. For through the Holocaust the Jews were able to create Israel and gained an ever greater authority and influence. This is more interesting than a debate over which is the real or unique genocide.

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Special Section on:

Is There a "*Telos*" Left in *Telos*? Reflections After 100 Issues

What was Telos *All About?*

Robert D'Amico

Telos once published articles about revolution, dialectic, commodity fetishism, liberation, alienation, and monopoly capitalism. It now publishes articles on federalism, populism, Carl Schmitt, and the nuances within conservatism. What is living and what is dead in *Telos*' Marxist past after 100 issues? To understand the journal's relation to Marxism and philosophy, it is necessary to recount some intellectual history. The term "Western Marxism" was coined in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Adventures of the Dialectic* and the political impulse of this theoretical view had its sources in his 1947 defense of Stalinism, *Humanism and Terror*. The term came to be applied, retrospectively, to the intra-communist disputes of the1920s reflected in the work of Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch, and Antonio Gramsci, among others. The Hegelian studies of Alexandre Kojève provided another theoretical source.

Western Marxism was encouraged by two factors. First, after WWII philosophers in continental Europe began to think of themselves as part of a unified intellectual movement of phenomenology — a philosophical method for providing a foundation for knowledge by way of unmediated first-person phenomenal descriptions. Second, Marx's collected works began to be read widely in the West only after WWII. His intellectual development (detailed in his early writings and later notebooks) confirmed the early work of Lukács and Korsch, both of whom formulated this theoretical picture of Marx without access to most of these texts. By comparison, Soviet Marxism, canonized in Leninism, appeared as an aberration.

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Marx was rediscovered as more a philosophical thinker than an economist; more a cultural, historical interpreter and critic than a scientist; more an intellectual opponent of classical liberalism than a militant leader of a political sect.

European intellectuals like Merleau-Ponty saw themselves trapped within a debate whose options were either commitment to communism or political repression in preparation for warfare with the Soviet Union. Whether this analysis was sound is not the point; it provided a motive to search for intellectual respectability in a doctrine they foresaw dominating Europe.

Telos emerged in this context. Its early editorial staff consisted of graduate students working their way through continental philosophy due to a common interest in Edmund Husserl. The journal was meant to transmit, situate, and mediate this intellectual debate for an audience unfamiliar with these philosophical traditions and the vocabulary peculiar to both the political and intellectual debates. The rediscovery of Lukács was part of this task. Discussions of Husserl, Heidegger, neo-Kantianism, and Hegel also occupied early issues. In general the journal had the right political instincts. Its entrance into these debates was accompanied by critical rejections of Leninism, Althusserianism, economism, structuralism, voluntarism, etc.

What happened? The phenomenological project of a foundational epistemology and metaphysics collapsed due to both internal problems and the disappearance of the distinct continental philosophical tradition after the rise of structuralism and post-structuralist literary theories. The eclipse of Marxism as a central topic in the journal predates the actual political collapse of communism in Eastern and Western Europe. By the mid-1970s the journal had begun to "officially" downplay its identity as a journal of Marxism and philosophy. By the mid-1980s exegetical material on Marx and Marxism rarely appeared (except for discussions of the Frankfurt School). But the spirit of the analyses on topics that did appear remained broadly leftist. The opposition to Soviet Marxism deepened and was extended to a rejection of the entire political debate which had gripped West European intellectuals since the war. Greater emphasis was placed on the moribund state of both Soviet society and its destructive impact on Eastern Europe. The efforts to shift to an analysis of American society were unsuccessful (except for the occasional attack on some current sociological or philosophical theorizing in academia) and the journal did not champion any single theoretical approach.

Outside *Telos*, there was an interesting but irrelevant effort to incorporate Marx into modern social science promoted by G. A. Cohen, Jon Elster, Daniel Little, and John Roemer. These efforts, starting around 1985 went largely unnoticed in the journal. The appeals to rational-choice theory, game theory, functionalism, and mathematical economics seemed an elaborate intellectual exercise in which the Marxist scaffolding was largely extraneous. Marxist politics gradually evolved into a *reductio ad absurdum* of liberalism. The politics of "marginalized social groups" demanded they be allowed into what Marx called the "very Eden

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of the innate rights of man. . . the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham." Abandoned was any serious effort to analyze the development of modern society or see any tension between social life and relations of equivalent exchange. Finally, "cultural Marxism," for want of a better name, remained alive with Frankfurt School critical theorists. Their attacks on American culture and society remained a common and largely unquestioned *leitmotif* of the journal well into the late 1980s. Aside from the exegetical work on the Frankfurt School that often appeared, the journal failed to return to the critical assessment of Marxism. Piccone's "artificial negativity" thesis opened up a brief possibility for a debate concerning the Marxist elements within Critical Theory, but that thesis was really an effort to salvage the tradition rather than preempt it.

The journal had begun by exploring some of the theoretical elements of Marxism, specifically the dialectic, historicism, sociology of knowledge, and the theory of ideology. Three positions can be identified within the journal. First, there were proponents of critical Marxism, who emphasized the use of dialectics, alienation, and cultural criticism of modern capitalism. Second, there were proponents of social science-type Marxism, who placed the emphasis on Marxist functionalism, interpretation theory, or general ideas of modernization and progress through the growth in productive forces. Finally, there were those searching for a new orthodoxy beyond Marxism. The idea was that the journal ought to have a theoretical-practical position somewhat specific to the American situation, blending non-Marxist intellectual traditions with the rudiments of New Left radicalism. Of course these three tendencies were neither mutually exclusive nor exclusively in each editorial voice. In lieu of resolving or debating them in its pages, the journal continued to publish Adornoesque analyses. This compromise allowed the Marxist heritage to haunt the journal's search for a new political theory without critically engaging the past. This involved, most critically, the continuation of functionalist-type analyses typical of traditional Marxism. By functionalism I mean analyses of social and political problems in terms of how the existence of some institution or practice (or intellectual movement) reinforces (by its effects) the maintenance of the society in which it exists (even in cases where the practice or movement is supposedly critical). This hidden functionalism manifested itself in a heavy dependence on the theory of ideology and sociology of knowledge. Social and political theories were read as representing various political interests and justifying or being in the service of political movements. This implicit functionalism was also associated with a tendency to label theoretical debate as impractical, conformist and passive. Finally, even though the journal was never interested in questions of economics, many contributions and debates about its direction continued to assume that society could be both altered and understood from a single sub-structure upon which the entire social structure hinged.

Where does the journal stand now? The focus on political theory and the history of ideas has not changed, but the argumentative strategies have shifted

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dramatically. The term "bourgeois" has been replaced by the often heard accusation that such and such a view is "New Class" ideology. Unfortunately, the journal has appeared to shift to more immediate, journalistic political disputes and away from the theoretical interests, broadly understood, of its youth. While the history of ideas remains its general approach, the notions of decentralization, populism and federalism have replaced older themes because of their current role in modern politics rather than in modern political theory. The European tradition, which remains the journal's central focus, is continually mined for insights concerning these issues which have been ignored or misread. Once again, therefore, the journal is playing the role of transmitting and situating debates unfamiliar to American minds (e.g., the discussions of the Northern Leagues, the French New Right and Carl Schmitt are examples of this revised agenda). The larger project of reconciling deep philosophical and political issues, however, has disappeared.

What might be the future tasks of the journal's contributors? A new vocabulary for political theory and political analysis that avoids the encrusted concepts of the past is needed. Connected with this project is the exploration of the history of political thought without adhering to such categorizations as liberal, conservative or radical. There also needs to be a critical discussion of communitarianism and the various defenses of a minimal state. The use of ideological and hidden-hand social explanations has, if anything, somewhat increased with the journal's recent exploration of conservative and populist thought. The theoretical debate about these concepts, short-circuited in the past, needs to be reopened. On a very specific point, another hidden continuation from the past is certain assumptions in arguments about populist or federalist movements about the evils of representative political organizations and the value of pure, direct democracies. This continues a utopian impulse which romanticizes unmediated political power and paradoxically has a history of being used for the justification of extensive repression. The final purge of speculative philosophy of history, dialectics, and pseudo-economic periodizations has not been completed; with it must come a reexamination of the social sciences and their history as part of a larger reexamination of the history of the state. Finally, the relation between theoretical social analysis and political movements remains as obscure as ever, especially since the single most dangerous and misleading slogan of the Marxist tradition, "the unity of theory and practice," has been finally discredited.

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Toward a North American Critical Theory

Tim Luke

There are many stories about *Telos*; some hidden, some open, many finished, many incomplete. Nonetheless, one or two of them can be recounted here. At a time when everyone blames 1960s radicals for the excesses of the liberal welfare state since the New Deal and the Great Society, it is important to reconsider the critical role of *Telos* within the Left since 1968. From the very beginning *Telos* has been an enterprise of some 1960s radicals with deep suspicions about the counter-culture and the New Left.[1] Seeking to gain greater insight into the suppressed traditions of Western Marxism and the Frankfurt School, *Telos* built a reputation for attacking not only the liberal welfare state, corporate capitalism and the culture industry but also, and most of all, the New Left itself.

Few *Telos* writers have floated out into the mainstream of American public discourse, although they have been read and appreciated abroad. Nonetheless, for over twenty-five years *Telos* has been in the vanguard or rearguard (as the occasion demanded) of almost every major development in social and political theory. Without *Telos*, there would be much less awareness of neo-Marxist, post-Marxist and anti-Marxist Critical Theory. As a radical analysis, Critical Theory has often failed to deliver. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the founding members of the Frankfurt School severed their connections to Marxism and turned to a critique of instrumental reason, the culture industry and the psycho-social formation of individual subjectivity[2] in order to identify some of the mechanisms with which corporate capital and the state successfully integrated the working class into the predominant system of domination. Their theoretical success also entailed political failure. Constantly searching for some authentic political opposition, this first generation did not turn up many reliable leads. Unwilling to articulate their analyses in an accessible idioms for fear of being instrumentalized by fascism, Stalinism or welfare state liberalism, they eventually retreated into aesthetics.[3]

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1. On *Telos*' early years, see John Fekete, "*Telos* at 50," *Telos* 50 (Winter 1981-82), pp. 160-171; and Paul Piccone, "20 Years of *Telos*," *Telos* 75 (Summer 1988), pp. 3-25.

2. Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and The Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1973); and David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

3. See Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London: Verso, 1974); *Negative Dialectic* (New York: Seabury, 1973); *Aesthetic Theory* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); and, Herbert Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension* (Boston: Beacon, 1978).

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During the 1960s, the second generation of critical theorists generally side-stepped radical analyses (particularly since their careers were doing very well within West Germany's *Wirtschaftwunder*) in favor of an elaborate "communication theory" of social interaction.[4] The rediscovery of the "symbolic dimension" with this linguistic turn led back into mainstream accounts of philosophical idealism and hyperfactual social science. Not surprisingly, this generation celebrated its rediscovery of liberal-democratic institutions as the basis of mounting progressive social transformation. These theoretical twists solved the audience problem, as most of this second generation's intellectual products were snapped up in the professional dialogues of the expanding postwar university systems on both sides of the Atlantic. Much of their analysis of Western capitalism, then, is posed in highly professionalized formats — suitable for peer review in the research programs of applied social science — and it has faded in and out of academic fashion over the last couple of decades.

Against this backdrop, a third generation of critical theorists drifted to *Telos*. Stressing the importance of Hegel, it avoided the pitfalls of previous generations — Kantian antinomies, communicative interaction, liberal ideology and mechanical Marxist political economy — by reemphasizing the dialectic, the theory of reification, and the dynamics of the totality, this time within a phenomenological framework.[5] The difficulty of speaking critically from the vantage point of an autonomous-rational subject, who either did not yet exist or was long gone, was thus eliminated. Instead, they pointed out that subjectivity is essential to the system and postulated a tenacious type of individuality that no complex capitalist system can function without and which resisted reification and commodification by the culture industry. These individuals and communities were seen as the last holdouts against bureaucratic centralism. This was not a withdrawal into litcrit aesthetics or academic victimology. Avoiding drifting in and out of the fog of postmodernism, this third generation has tried to come to terms with the new dynamics of the system, while at the same time prefiguring possible responses. Where the second generation might see increasing democratization, growing rationalization, and the reconciliation of the totality with its parts in a bizarre post-Cold War "civil society," the *Telos* analysis sees increasing discord and difference: decreasing

4. For the beginnings of these shifts, see Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1979); and, *The Theory of Communicative Action*: *Vol. I, Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

5. See Paul Piccone, "Phenomenological Marxism," *Telos* 9 (Fall 1971). Also see Russell Berman, *Modern Culture and Critical Theory*: *Art, Politics and the Legacy of the Frankfurt School* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Timothy W. Luke, *Screens of Power*: *Ideology, Domination and Resistance in Informational Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Russell Jacoby, *Dialectic of Defeat*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); William Leiss, *The Domination of Nature* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

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democracy, growing irrationality, and spreading destruction.

Yet, after 100 issues, *Telos* is more or less where it was at its inception: on the margins of the academy, developing alternatives from many intellectual traditions. Elements of the New Left, Old Left, New Right, Old Right all percolate with tinges of anarchism, populism, and maybe even touches of stoicism in its pages.[6] Sometimes writing with panache, other times working with sledgehammers, *Telos* has allowed a measure of irony and humor few other journals equal.

As outsiders, *Telos* contributors are still a very loose band of radical contrarians refusing to buckle down to mainstream academic commitments by publishing only in the right journals about politically correct topics in the approved lingo, refusing to knuckle under to conventional New Class statist assumptions, bureaucratic loyalties or professional courtesies. They disagree more than they agree, which is what makes *Telos* so agreeable for radical criticism. As outlaws, *Telos* contributors flout professional values merely by working to keep this journal going in an era when most journals are generally academic outlets for intellectually deadening careerist publications or some publishing firm's latest acquisition in an empire-building game that brings once independent voices into the stable of some multimedia corporate conglomerate. From its initial popularization of Western Marxism and Critical Theory to its current investigations into radical populism and anti-statist federalism, *Telos* has continued to explore where few either on the Left or the Right have gone before, but also where many may soon settle.[7]

Not surprisingly, the *modus operandi* of *Telos* differs significantly from more conventional journals. *Telos* contributors frequently brawl openly with each other over the nature of the "new frontiers" they are exploring. Looking back, discussions over Marx and Marxism, Lenin and Leninism, Habermas and communicative interaction, Eastern Europe and "civil" society, Western Europe and new social movements, Schmitt and political theory, European theorists and American mass culture in "Notes and Commentary" all have been marked by

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6. To get a sense of this diversity, one needs to reread the *Telos* back issues where Herbert Marcuse, Jean Paul Sartre, Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin appear along with Alain de Benoist, Carl Schmitt, Michel Foucault, Christopher Lasch as well as Alvin Gouldner, Murray Bookchin, William Leiss, Hans Magnus Enzensberger plus Russell Jacoby, Martin Jay, Joel Kovel, James Schmidt and Karel Kosik, Georg Lukács, Ferenc Feher and Agnes Heller.

7. From the First *Telos* International Conference on "The New Marxism," *Telos* 6 (Fall 1970) through the Antioch "*Telos* Conference," *Telos* 32 (Summer 1977) or St. Louis *Telos* Conference, "The Totally Administered Society," *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), the journal reexamined the problematics posed by Western Marxism and the Frankfurt School. However, beginning with the Cortland "Conference on Narcissism," *Telos* 44 (Summer 1980), the Kansas *Telos* Conference, "The Crisis of the Left," *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-1981), and the Carbondale *Telos* Conference, "Ecology and the Welfare State," *Telos* 52 (Summer 1982), the journal took up its post-leftist populist critique that continues up to the most recent *Telos* Conference in New York, "Populism and the New Politics," held in December 1994.

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theoretical turmoil, confrontational critique, and *ad hominem* assault.[8] Often the results have not been pretty, especially when the fisticuffs continued out behind the woodshed in the "*Telos* Editors' Newsletter," but the insights generated by such dust-ups have been extremely valuable.

When other Left journals celebrated Marx and Lenin, *Telos* excavated their darkside. When other voices accepted the inevitable stability of the Soviet state and the empty stagnation of East European society as a price of superpower detente, *Telos* relentlessly attacked the moral bankruptcy and political nightmare of neo-Stalinism in its actually existing forms from East Germany to North Korea, publishing analyses from East European dissidents, Soviet *samizdat* and anti-Soviet outsiders which saw correctly that the USSR and the Warsaw Pact were crumbling from within.[9] When others fixated on the professional-technical classes administering advanced capitalist societies from above through massive state bureaucracies or gargantuan corporate hierarchies by celebrating the virtues of the ideal speech situation, *Telos* pushed anti-statist, anti-bureaucratic, anti-managerial critiques espousing the significance of municipalization, localism, and entrepreneuralism.[10]

In many ways, *Telos* has been remarkably consistent in its politics. On one level, its pages have often been encrypted in a kind of impenetrable code, combining strange tropes and tortured syntax from phenomenology, alienation aesthetics, and cultural critique translated from Hungarian/German/Italian/French. On another level, *Telos* assumes that if one speaks, some will listen and a few may eventually understand. Through the twists and turns of its many theoretical explorations, *Telos* contributors have proven to be advocates of popular empowerment and the professional-technical classes' disempowerment. Basically anarchist in its

8. A representative exchange over interlinked questions of the German Peace Movement, Eastern Europe, the USSR and civil society continued in *Telos* 51 (Spring 1982), 52 (Summer 1982), 53 (Fall 1982), 56 (Summer 1983), 57 (Fall 1983), 59 (Spring 1984), 60 (Summer 1984), 62 (Winter 1984-85), and 63 (Spring 1985).

9. See, for example, Antonio Carlo, "The Socio-Economic Nature of the USSR," *Telos* 21 (Fall 1974); Alvin Gouldner, "Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism," *Telos* 34 (Winter 1977-78); Victor Zaslavsky, "The USSR and the Working Class," *Telos* 42 (Winter 1979-80); Paul Piccone and Victor Zaslavsky, "The Socio-Economic Roots of Rearmament," *Telos* 50 (Winter 1981-82); Tim Luke, "The Nature of Soviet Society," *Telos* 63 (Spring 1985); Sharon Zukin, "Our Eastern European *Telos*," *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988); Gábor Rittersporn, "Reforming the Soviet System," *Telos* 79 (Spring 1989); Paul Piccone, "Paradoxes of *Perestroika*," *Telos* 84 (Summer 1990); Tim Luke, "Postcommunism in the USSR: The McGulag Archipelago," *Telos* 84 (Summer 1990); and, Gábor Rittersporn, "Buying Intellectual Pre-Fabs," *Telos* 96 (Summer 1993).

10. Murray Bookchin, "Self-Management and the New Technology," *Telos* 41 (Fall 1979); Norberto Bobbio, "The Future of Democracy," *Telos* 61 (Fall 1984); David Gross "Reconstituting the Past," *Telos* 86 (Winter 1990-91); Christopher Lasch, "Liberalism and Civic Virtue," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991); Paul Piccone, "Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts: Beyond Pseudo-Culture," *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993); and, Russell Jacoby, "Journalists, Cynics, and Cheerleaders," *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993).

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politics, *Telos* has spoken for community against the state, ordinary people against the experts. While it remains anti-capitalist in its suspicions of concentrated corporate power, enlightened managerial authority, and self-interested predatory business, *Telos* has never blindly endorsed any flavor of socialism as the antidote to what bureaucratized transnational capital does to the environment, families, and localities. In its efforts to keep Critical Theory from becoming conformist, *Telos* has unflinchingly attacked the academic domestication of critical thinking as a business of professors, by professors, and for professors. Integrating Critical Theory into the cycles of academic production and consumption has only emptied its categories of the *engagé* anger so essential to making such theories transform real social practices beyond the advancement of academic careers or the provision of pretexts for publishing precious pedantic tracts about discursive democracy, communicative competence or aesthetic authority.[11]

Telos contributors recognize how contemporary intellectuals and radical political groups often lack the foresight and power to transform this world. Any intellectual who pretends to do much more than understand the current problematic world situation arouses well-deserved suspicion and skepticism. The last two or three decades have shown how easily and thoroughly radical political alternatives in such circumstances becomes integrated into the same system of domination, eventually revitalizing and rationalizing its operations, even though their resistance first wanted to destroy it. By clarifying critical reasoning and moral sensibilities, however, *Telos* addresses those populist resistances, rising continually in many places outside the academy, to consider what must not be done. By helping people come to such realizations, *Telos*-style currents of Critical Theory expose the limited utility of fixating on victimization either self-willed or imposed from without.

While the terminology is relatively new, a radical *populist* undercurrent has always flowed through the pages of *Telos*. In the debates of the 1970s, over the New Class and radical intellectuals or artificial negativity and organic resistance, a considerable distrust of established networks of elite meritocracy is obvious. Likewise, the 1990s discussions about new populist movements, alternative federalisms, state paralysis or theories of sovereignty all touch upon how to disempower experts and empower ordinary people.[12] *Telos* contributors have also been exploring the limits of conservatism and liberalism as political ideologies. Even more suspicious of the welfare state than many conservatives, they pushed the

11. On the politics of intellectuals, see "The Role of Intellectuals in the 1980s," *Telos* 50 (Winter 1981-82); "The Crisis in Higher Education," *Telos* 71 (Spring 1987); "Intellectuals and the University," *Telos* 81 (Fall 1989); "Affirmative Action in Academia," *Telos* 86 (Winter 1990-91); and, "The Crisis of American Education," *Telos* 97 (Fall 1993).

12. See the Second Elizabethtown *Telos* Conference, "Populism vs. The New Class," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991); Special Issue on Federalism, *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992); Special Issue on Traditions, *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), and, Special Double Issue, "The French New Right," *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994).

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options available in localities, families, and intentional communities. Wary of the marketplace as many liberals, *Telos* has attacked concentrated corporate power by favoring independent personal and communal producership. Possible concrete programs for such populist politics are still being debated.

In this respect, the *Telos* reading of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is particularly revealing.[13] The corruption of radical revolution and popular power by the USSR provided *Telos* with much of its program from the very beginning. From 1968 on, few journals have had a more definitive analysis of what the USSR was all about, why the CPSU was destroying the Soviet economy, how the US and the USSR evolved into a codependent thermonuclear relation, and where the Soviet Union began cracking into the many fragments of post-Soviet disunion. Likewise, in the post-Soviet era *Telos* has not celebrated the false promises of democracy and freedom so glibly assumed to be positive achievements of the Yeltsin regime. Instead, already in 1990 *Telos* contributors foresaw what has developed all across the former Soviet Union over the past four years: civil war, mafia profiteering, authoritarian rule, cultural conflict, economic collapse, foreign meddling.[14]

Despite the many zigs-zags in the history of *Telos*, the journal remains consistent. Never convinced that the state is either just or rational, *Telos* has been emphatically anti-statist. While many leftists sign off on Weber's writ for the modern state, in which well-intentioned and wise professionals rationally apply logical procedures in complex bureaucratic organizations to serve the public weal, *Telos* has continually highlighted the irrational side of allegedly rational-bureaucratic state authorities. Rarely certain about the efficiency or fairness of the market, *Telos* also has remained contra-capitalist in its analyses. Although many liberals accept the possibility that corporate power, when rightly regulated with state power or competently counterbalanced by organized labor, could be efficient and fair, *Telos* rejected these Progressive/New Deal/Great Society concords, seeing the inefficiencies and injustices embedded at the core of immense concentrations of corporate capital. Not persuaded that modern nations are true communities of equality, liberty and fraternity established to embody unconflicted identities or to express unequal interests, *Telos* also has stayed anti-nationalist. Most modern

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13. See, for a range of examples, Sergio Bologna, "Class Composition and Theory of the Party," *Telos* 13 (Fall 1972); Francois George, "Forgetting Lenin," *Telos* 18 (Winter 1973-74); Alvin Gouldner, "Prologue to a Theory of Revolutionary Intellectuals," *Telos* 26 (Winter 1976076); Cornelius Castoriadis, "The Social Regime in Russia," *Telos* 38 (Winter 1978-79); "Poland and the Future of Socialism," *Telos* 47 (Spring 1981); Leo Timofeev, "Black Market Technology in the USSR," *Telos* 51 (Spring 1982); Victor Zaslavsky, "On Sovietization," *Telos* 71 (Spring 1987); Luciano Pellicani, "Preconditions for Soviet Economic Development," *Telos* 84 (Summer 1990); and, John L. Campbell, "The Fiscal Crisis of Post-Communist States," *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992).

14. See Special Section, "The Future of the USSR," *Telos* 84 (Summer 1990).

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intellectuals have assumed the nation-state to be the most appropriate vessel to contain modern communities; but *Telos* consistently has stressed the merits of local, municipal, regional or other subnational forms of community, defined in terms of ecological, ethnic or ethical particularities, against the more artificial universalistic construct of the nation-state.[15]

After 100 issues, *Telos* continues to advance new, systematic, radical critiques of society. By elaborating open-ended, ever-changing analyses, *Telos* provides some guideposts for populist resistances. Yet *Telos* also warns against millenarian fantasies of total redemption through political action. All human beings are entangled and enmeshed in a recalcitrant reality made of enduring cultural traditions, the demands of everyday life, and often unyielding personal identities that no academic system of intellectual categories can ever wholly unravel. A critical theory that ignores these realities risks presuming too much. Even as it pretends to realize discursive democracy as it allegedly tracks the ruses of reason along some Jacobin or Stalinist trail, too many times it becomes an infallible road map to some irresistible future. Caution, which the irony and acidity of *Telos* critiques always recharge, should warn that the future is almost always resistible; there are few reliable road maps to anywhere.

Today things are less clear than they were in 1968. The end of the Cold War, the collapse of East/West blocs, the unravelling of the welfare state, the bankruptcy of traditional political ideologies, the complexities of globalized informational modes of production, and the imponderables of ecological crisis all have combined in the 1990s to create a terrain where there will be no easy answers, even though liberal and conservative pundits keep preparing warmed-over 1960s statism or 1980s marketeering as solutions. Still, the small band of *Telos* collaborators most likely will pave the most promising way for developing radically new approaches to these problems. In paving these paths, however, *Telos* will continue to be suspicious of both the state and the market in testing the possibilities of popular communitiarian alternatives. Yet it should not become entangled in fairly simple-minded oppositions of "states" versus "markets," such as those that plague more mainstream sociological or political statist agendas.

Much of the federal populism *Telos* is examining more closely in many of its recent issues is an attempt to think beyond the mechanical fusion of states and markets, which often sees abstract state power as a defender of popular class interests against predatory capital. Sometimes states protect communities, but they just as often tend to feed community interests, local values, and popular concerns up to national or transnational businesses to advance central statist policy-making goals. Global business certainly is not a friendly force in local communities, but its powers for destruction can be fought on a local or regional basis.

15. See for these discussions, the Special Issues on Carl Schmitt, Federalism and the European System of Nation-States in *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987), *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), and *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994).

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Indeed, most initiatives for ecological protection, economic relief, or ethical consideration come from some concrete local site where a definite injustice or irrationality is creating real casualties. They do not necessarily arise out of huge state bureaucracies intent upon defending abstract universal principles. By delving into federal populism, *Telos* continues one of its most fundamental points of resistance into a post-Cold War era: the critique of the state. Instead of regarding state power as that last great bulwark of universal interests against popular irrationality or cultural barbarism, the state still is appraised by *Telos* as a primary source of irrational activity as well as a central site for barbaric undertakings.

Local communities do have a propensity at times for visiting inhumane misdeeds upon themselves and others, but their potential for mischief pales beside the actual record of states for repression and injustice. Attempts by intellectuals to blame only local communities for racism, xenophobia and intolerance, while holding forth the state as society's last best hope for enlightened humanism or universal rights are not convincing. There is evidence to be marshalled on both sides, yet the scale and depth of the destruction imposed upon modern societies by the state greatly outstrips the dark side of many communitiarian crises. Certainly local communities cannot be considered totally without blame, but, at the same time, most of the values intellectuals invent for or attribute to the state typically come first and foremost from some community's local popular practices.

The flexible post-Fordist modes of production now proliferating in the guises of deindustrialization, national competitiveness, and transnationalization are not necessarily going to be checked by strong nation-states. The transformation of Canada, Mexico and the US into "NAFTAland," the currency market's power to pound the US dollar down or the Japanese yen up nearly 20% in a few weeks, the meltdown of national borders by the flows of drugs, refugees, commodities, or migrants, and the inability of NATO powers to keep order in Bosnia, Kurdistan, Rwanda, Somalia or Chechenya all suggest that the inclusive national polity is essentially a paper tiger. In this context, as some signs in the current *Telos* debates indicate, federal populist designs for resisting both global transnational business and national bureaucratic power might be the most effective means for wading through the swamps of post-Cold War disorder.

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Where is Telos *Going?*

David Gross

It may seem surprising to many people that *Telos* has not only survived long enough to publish its 100th issue, but that, as journals go, it is still relatively alert and healthy, showing as yet no signs of internal deterioration. Other journals which, like *Telos,* either first appeared along with the New Left in the 1960s or were otherwise closely associated with it (*Studies on the Left, Liberation, democracy,* etc.) have long since expired. Yet *Telos* has persisted.

What is perhaps even more surprising about *Telos*' longevity is that it has been the *kind* of journal it is, and yet has endured for so long. I mean by this that *Telos* has consistently done two things that should have ensured its early demise: it has criticized everything and everybody, friends and foes alike, and often not with grace or subtlety but with a polemical no-holds-barred style that has often seemed designed more to crush than to win over; and second, it has taken far more risks than journals normally do, sometimes going in directions its readership has a hard time following or accepting.

With regard to the first, *Telos* has embodied "the spirit that contradicts" more thoroughly than any recent journal of which I am aware (that is, unless one goes all the way back to, say, the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher.*) From its inaugural issue to the present one, it has been focused on critique, and this to such an extent that *Telos* seems to represent the pure *urge to criticize* somehow materialized in a journal format. It has, for example, been critical of liberalism for everything under the sun, most recently for being "terminally statist" and for producing "state-dependent personalities." It has been critical of the so-called New Class intellectual, i.e., those managers, technicians, administrators and members of the "helping professions" who have had a vested interest in promoting the modern welfare state and contemporary therapeutic culture. It has been critical of the American political Right (represented by Nixon, Reagan, Bush, and now Gingrich), and of all aspects of mainstream, market-oriented conservatism. It has likewise been critical of practically all the major institutions of present-day society, especially the university. It has been critical of the culture industry, capitalism, consumerism, commodity fetishism, and it has attacked *all* the fads and fashions of modern thought, including deconstruction, postmodernism, the "New Philosophers," and the like. Last but not least, it has been critical of the Left: not only the Left of Orthodox Marxism (*Telos* has engaged in as uncompromising an assault on Soviet and Eastern European Marxism as one can find anywhere in print), but the Left of Western Marxism as well, for even when *Telos* introduced many of the major theorists of Western Marxism to American

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readers, it always did so "critically," never naively: never with the sense that "here is the answer!"[1] When a journal places that much emphasis on "the ruthless criticism of everything that exists," one might wonder how it could manage to stay afloat for more than a few issues.

With regard to the second point above — *Telos*' willingness to take exceptional risks in what it publishes — this, too, should have led to an early death. Over the past two and a half decades, *Telos* has had a very poor sense of the boundaries it was supposed to work within in order to satisfy its own readership. Instead, just when readers must have thought they knew what to expect, *Telos* has repeatedly done the unpredictable, acted imprudently, broken what appeared to be its own trajectory and, under the banner of pursuing "the truth" regardless of where it leads, has proceeded to explore various themes that other New Left journals have considered taboo. Hence, for example, at precisely the moment when Habermas' work was being widely acclaimed in this country, some (but not all) *Telos* editors began to take exception to it, and in fact to attack aggressively Habermas' thought as little more than warmed-over Kantianism, which surely alienated many hitherto faithful *Telos* readers. Similarly, *Telos*' friendliness toward the writings of Carl Schmitt, or its publication last year of a double issue on the French New Right, must also have seemed to many readers provocative at best, and at worst a sign that the journal had at last given up being, by any stretch of the imagination, a forum for "leftist" thinking. Once again, common sense would suggest that this amount of risk-taking — even if in pursuit of new ideas or new conceptual tools for understanding the present — is not to be recommended to any periodical bent on surviving for any length of time.

Actually, it is probably the case that no journal can last for very long if it has going for it *nothing more than* a drive to criticize or a penchant for risk-taking. Every journal worth its salt also needs a *vision,* for (to badly maul Proverbs 29:18) without vision a journal will perish. What sort of vision has *Telos* had that might at least partly explain its longevity?

Telos' original vision, I think, had to do with providing the New Left with the kind of theoretical foundation it seemed so badly to lack, either because it suffered from too much American pragmatism or because it was blindly tripping down paths leading toward Stalinism, Maoism, or various forms of Third-Worldism. But when the New Left collapsed as a *bona fide* movement by the early 1970s, this initial theoretical task *Telos* had given itself appeared to become meaningless. Many of the editors, of which I was by that time one, felt as

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1. The many essays by Lukács, Korsch, Kosik, Marcuse, Adorno, Horkheimer, and numerous others (which *Telos* was the first to translate and publish) were always presented as works rich in insight, but also as works that were flawed and incomplete. From the outset, *Telos* warned that ideas formed in Central Europe in the 1920s and 1930s — or for that matter in the Paris of the 1960s and 1970s — could never be adopted and applied uncritically to post-WWII America without leading to absurd consequences.

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sea creatures must feel who find themselves stranded on the shore after the tide that brought them there has ebbed. While still holding on to many of their original ideals, the *Telos* editors were nonetheless entirely displaced from what had once been their natural element; to be more exact, they were theoreticians with no movement to theorize *for*! Under the circumstances, there had to be — and was — a reconceptualization of what the journal thought it was doing by publishing at all. Before turning to what this reconceptualization amounted to, it needs to be said that *Telos* was obviously not alone in having to face a post-1975 social and political reality (much of it under the Reagan and Bush presidencies) which turned out to be almost exactly opposite the one the New Left had expected in 1968. Other groupings and other journals, which had also been a part of the New Left, found themselves in the same predicament, stranded on the seashore. Like *Telos,* they too responded by trying to re-think what they were about, but in doing so, they developed "visions" of their tasks that were quite unlike those of *Telos.*

For instance, one direction taken by remnants of the 1960s Left is that represented by journals such as *Socialist Review, Radical America,* or *Z.* It is a direction which has tallied up what the New Left "really" stood for in its heyday, and has then set about defending those principles all along the line. That has meant, among other things, a vigorous defense of feminism, gay and lesbian rights, multiculturalism, affirmative action, a "humane" foreign policy, workplace democracy, and other "progressive" or social democratic positions regarding labor and domestic issues. *Telos* has not followed this route out of the 1960s, which is why the work that has appeared in its pages has seemed so far removed from what one finds in, say, *Radical America* or *Socialist Review* — even though all three journals emerged at about the same time from roughly the same political and intellectual milieu.

Another direction, based on another kind of vision, is one that has led to what is now called Cultural Studies. Many who identified with a leftist worldview in the 1960s but who later became academics came to see a liberatory potential not, as before, in "youth," or the poor, or the working class, but rather in the multiple forms of modern mass culture, including film, rap or rock music, TV serials, graffiti art, pulp fiction, and the like. Journals such as *Cultural Critique*, *Cultural Studies*, and to some extent *Social Text,* have attracted former sixties radicals many of whom now think that commercialized popular culture contains something emancipatory, and therefore something deserving of careful scrutiny (i.e., by means of close textual readings, media analysis, or assessments of the conditions of cultural production). Once again, *Telos* has not followed this direction, which is why the writings of people like Andrew Ross, or Dick Hebdige, or John Fiske — all highly touted by Cultural Studies advocates — have never received attention in *Telos.*

In sum: neither of these two "visions" — the liberal-progressive vision of protecting or expanding "rights" and "freedoms" on the one hand, or the vision of freeing the radical potential of mass culture on the other — have seemed particularly

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attractive to *Telos*. In fact — and characteristically! — *Telos* has itself criticized both positions. But if these notions of what a journal ought to concern itself with do not seem compelling, what does? Is simply the will-to-criticize, combined with an inclination to now and then publish *outré* writers like Schmitt or Benoist, enough to explain the persistence of *Telos,* or has *Telos* survived at least in part because it has offered a "vision" of its own?

It seems to me that a positive vision is certainly evident in *Telos*' strong support for populism, communitarianism, and federalism, even though this support has only become pronounced since the late 1980s. It is true that elements of populism and communitarianism can be found in some of the earliest issues of the journal, but it was not until relatively recently that these elements have come more powerfully to the fore.[2] (Federalism, by contrast, was not dealt with at all until about 1990.) If anything, it was Frankfurt School Critical Theory that provided *Telos* with its guiding framework throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and Critical Theory was not populist. On the contrary, the Frankfurt School's founding generation was suspicious of both populism and communitarianism because it saw them as ideologically too close to fascist organicism. Lately, however, most of *Telos*' editors have rethought populism and communitarianism, and have by now come to embrace both as social values (along with federalism, which is based on the other two). All three of these "isms," when taken together, represent a kind of vision of what society ought to be. The drive to criticize obviously still remains strong — *Telos* would be unthinkable without it — but now this drive is directed mainly against those things that militate against the "ideal" of a decentralized and federated society of autonomous individuals who, though self-directed, have a highly-developed sense of responsibility to the community of which they are an integral part. This is not to say that something resembling this vision is not also present in the other two offshoots of the 1960s New Left mentioned above. *Telos* is certainly not alone in stressing the importance of self-determinization, direct democracy, cultural particularity, and the like. Nevertheless, the *way Telos* deals with these issues is very different from others, and this in two respects.

First, *Telos* accepts more than other facets of the Left do the notion that upholding the integrity of local communities necessarily implies approving and working with a mass of still-surviving customs, traditions, and habits of thought that are normally dismissed as backward, if not reactionary, by the progressive Left. Instead of seeking to eradicate these residual elements as quickly as possible

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2. Some core aspects of populism and communitarianism can be detected in Piccone's 1971 phenomenological defense of immediacy and particularity in the *Lebenswelt*, or in the many essays by Bookchin that were published over the years, or in the attention given to the "new social movements" in the first half of the 1980s. With regard to the last mentioned, it is interesting that even though there were certainly populist and neo-populist aspects implicit in these new social movements, *Telos*' response to them was mixed. Some editors welcomed them as potentially emancipatory, while others were wary of their allegedly nationalistic, opportunistic, and conformist character.

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in order to prepare the way for something better, *Telos* has tried to take a positive attitude toward them by arguing that, because they contain values and meanings which, once abolished, can never be recovered, especially not administratively, they ought to be preserved and/or "reconstituted," but not, as much of the New Left thinks, simply declared *passé* and consigned to the dustbin of history.

Second, many if not most people associated with *Telos* are willing to accept that, as already mentioned, populism can just as well be a movement of the Right as of the Left. They likewise accept that, depending on context, populism can manifest qualities of xenophobia, parochialism, and organicist exclusivity no less readily than those of egalitarianism, tolerance, and democratic inclusivity. Many on the American Left have not wanted to notice what might be called the dark side of populism. They have preferred to think that populism is always something radical and progressive, and hence have shut their eyes to the fact that people have often "opt[ed] democratically for what (could be considered) unsavory political forms," or that movements such as Nazism or fascism "were supported by a substantial majority of Germans and Italians [or] that, as Lanzmann's *Shoah* has shown, anti-Semitism was a very widespread sentiment among ordinary Polish citizens."[3] But if it is in fact true that populism can be located in no fixed place on the political spectrum; and further, if it is acknowledged that populism has always contained a mixture of qualities, some good some bad, then it would seem to make sense that *all* forms of populism be given a fair hearing regardless of how they happen to be defined or pigeonholed ideologically. This catholic approach to populism (which frankly follows a logic that seems strained to me, and which I do not think has yielded that much in the way of results) may in part explain the "New French Right" issue of *Telos*. The editors who assembled it believed they saw in some elements of "rightist" populist thought in France *both* a mass of unacceptable ideas that deserved outright rejection (e.g., everything connected with Le Pen's National Front, but also Benoist's "pagan pluralism," etc.) *and* a collection of other ideas, very similar to those informing the New Left in the 1960s, that deserved serious consideration, among them an emphasis on "participatory democracy, self-determination and local autonomy," and an opposition to "capitalism, bureaucratic domination, nationalism, racism and traditional imperialism."[4] Here is a typical instance of *Telos*' willingness to cross boundaries and follow lines of thought that still seem unacceptable or reprehensible to many — especially when such crossings lead to the camps of those customarily designated as "enemies."

Populism, communitarianism, and federalism, then, are what comprise *Telos*' "vision" at the present time. Though there is nothing wrong with this vision as such, it might seem strange that *Telos* has identified itself with it, for

3. Paul Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?" *Telos* 98-99 (Winter, 1993-Spring, 1994), p. 17.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

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over the years *Telos* has acquired the reputation for being one of the most abstractly theoretical journals to come out of the 1960s New Left. Can a journal as theoretical as *Telos* still be convincingly populist or communitarian? Maybe it can be — but only if it stays at the level of theory and does not make false claims about being in touch with "the people." Yet if *Telos* stays at the level of theory, how credible can it be with respect to populist issues? Should not a journal that advocates more power to "real, existing people" be forming its theoretical positions in direct interaction with the individuals or communities it wants to empower? If so, this is not happening. Few of *Telos*' editors can claim to have any significant contact with "the people" — admittedly a problematic term in itself[5] — and fewer still can claim that they "think in relation" to them (that is, as "organic intellectuals").[6] This separation from the actual *Lebenswelten* of most of the population, and the lack of *experiential* knowledge about what people in general really want or think, are two things that should concern *Telos* more than they have so far. In the absence of any substantial empirical (as opposed to theoretical) knowledge of actual, living people — I mean people other than intellectuals and academics — I wonder how long a genuinely populist, communitarian, and federalist vision can be maintained.

This brings up a related but perhaps more serious problem. *Telos* does not know how *not* to be critical. It is now and always has been driven by an irresistible need to criticize practically everything it confronts, so much so that it is surely only a matter of time before it turns its critical weapons against its own populist, communitarian, and federalist "vision," and begins to attack and undermine the very premises that now shape its identity. It is conceivable that *Telos* editors and authors might at some point begin to doubt that "the people" are actually or potentially as democratic as one would like to think; or that they really want to take responsibility for their lives by becoming "subjects" in the fullest sense of the word; or that there truly are such things as "residual organic communities"

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5. From Michelet on, the term "the people" has had an incredibly complex history. Even in the 1990s, "the people" has so many meanings (some of them contradictory) that it would be virtually impossible to fathom them all. For example — and this only skims the surface for aging Orthodox Marxists today — "the people" still means more or less the industrial working class. For Christopher Lasch in his last two books "the people" appears to mean the broad and neglected lower-middle class. For the Cultural Studies crowd, "the people" has cane to mean, as Jackson Lears has facetiously put it, a whole range of types "from lesbians of color to heterosexuals of paler hue." And for a so-called radical populist like Newt Gingrich, "the people" means (once the rhetoric is stripped away) not the "salt of the earth" as it might have in the old days, but (again in Lears' words) "bankers and real estate developers." See Jackson Lears, "Gutter Populist," *The New Republic,* January 9 & 16, 1995, p. 39.

6. Practically all of the journal's editors are academics or Mannheimian free floating intellectuals, and nearly all of them live in Manhattan or along the East Coast. In fact, I think I am the only editor who lives in the over 2000 mile expanse between western Ohio and the Pacific Ocean, and I live in Boulder, Colorado, which is hardly a redoubt of "the people."

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around that have somehow managed to escape being eviscerated by a rationalizing, instrumentalizing, and interventionist state; or that federalism, however appealing it may be on paper, can actually be made to work in a world of globalized market capitalism. If *Telos* undertook this kind of critique against its own assumptions, it would subvert the very vision that now sustains it. And with that vision lost or weakened, what would happen to the journal?

This is of course hypothetical, but my guess is that *Telos* — being unwilling and probably constitutionally unable to go over to a social democratic, or a Cultural Studies, or any kind of "new politics" point of view — would turn back to the only position that would make sense given its particular history since the 1960s: namely, to the position of the first generation of Critical Theorists. From the original Critical Theory perspective of Adorno, Marcuse, and Horkheimer, *Telos* would then be able to wage war on practically everything it now opposes: the evils of mass society, the disintegration of value infrastructures, the emptiness of modern-day consumerism, and the high personal and political costs of statist domination. But, lacking any confidence that "the people" would ever take matters into their own hands to change the world for the better (or that there are emancipatory possibilities contained in high culture which might yet be unfolded in the future), the journal would no doubt slip into a mode of pessimistic and elitist *Kulturkritik* — a kind of critique that could well turn out to be even more despairing than Adorno at his bleakest.

So long as *Telos* remains committed to populism, communitarianism, and federalism, it will not have to revert to the almost pure negativity of the original Frankfurt School. But if it begins to call any or all of these "isms" into question, it will be forced into an even deeper kind of reckoning — this one concerning its very identity as a journal. At age 101, *Telos* has passed through its youthful phase and suffered more than one mid-life crisis, but these transitions have by no means opened the way to the contentments of old age. The question of what kind of journal *Telos* is or intends to be is still in the process of being answered.

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Critical Intellectuals and Identity Logic: Politics, Representation and Community

John Michael

In his introduction to the special *Telos* issue on the French New Right[1] Paul Piccone locates the main thrust of the Frankfurt School's attack on modernity in its critique of identity logic. The violence of fascism in pre-war Europe and the failure of liberalism in today's US, he specifies, have a common origin in the "identity logic of Enlightenment ideology," whose "abstract universalism . . . comes to dominate concrete particularity . . . The abstract concept redefines the concrete particular in its own image while delegitimating all that is left out of this exercise in conceptual engineering . . ."[2] Modernity's violence is a legacy of failed enlightenment strategies of representation which attempt to articulate power, reason, and rights. These attempts succeed only in legitimating a New Class of intellectuals whose efforts at conceptual engineering institute new patterns of domination and oppression, the effects of which entail not only the destruction or exclusion of the particular and traditional on the cultural, communal, and political levels, but also the nearly total alienation and extinction of the individuals who are its putative subjects.[3] The problem inheres in the paradoxes of representation. The alleged solution lies in reconstructed, organic communities on the one hand revitalized participatory democracies on the other. Taken together, these promise to avoid the delegation and empowerment of intellectuals whose task it is to construct, legitimate, and instrumentalize representations of and in the community. Piccone's organic community is an attempt to imagine a community without the mediating work of intellectuals, for if a community is homogeneous it requires no negotiation of power through representation. His argument, however, indicates that this is surprisingly difficult to do.

In Alain de Benoist, intellectual representative of the French New Right, Piccone finds a critique of Enlightenment universalism similar to Horkheimer's and Adorno's. He also recognizes a populist, radical democratic communitarianism the Frankfurt school could never have accommodated but which is similar to the

1. *Telos* 98-99 (Winter-Spring 1994)

2. Paul Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?" *Telos* 98-99 (Winter-Spring 1994), pp. 10-11.

3. Piccone provides a more elaborated version of the relations between these aspects of modernity in "Beyond Psuedo-Culture? Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts" *Telos* 95 (Spring 93), pp. 3-14.

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populism Piccone has long championed. The one error Piccone identifies in de Benoist's thought is a critical misreading of US culture and history as the univocal expression of modernity's worst tendencies. On the contrary, Piccone claims to find the organic communities his populism requires populating the US countryside: "What the French New Right fails to realize is that the sort of cultural particularity it wants to vindicate against that old Left scarecrow, 'American Imperialism,' is precisely the same American model developed during the 18th century colonial experience. Although gradually eroded and marginalized since the early 19th century, this model remains deeply ingrained in a paradigmatically American ethos still thriving in the more rural areas of the country."[4] For Piccone and the New Right, organic community promises a return of critical leverage — a populist, radical democratic, communitarian machine powerful enough to displace the globalization of culture and capitalism and to solve the problems of representation and power. Yet the figure of organic community may not offer an alternative to the Enlightenment's identity logic and all that attends it but rather another instance of its functioning in which an "abstract concept" produced by intellectuals aspiring to representativeness "redefines the concrete particular in its own image while delegitimating all that is left out of this exercise in conceptual engineering. . ."[5] The problem with organic community, as Piccone and de Benoist conceptualize it, is precisely what (or who) gets left out of or oppressed by its dominant representations. The problem with organic community is the problem of difference, which is also the problem that ensures representation will continue to figure in any community imaginable and that intellectual labor and the power which may attend it will remain an issue.

The conjunction of Piccone and de Benoist makes clear that the critique of identity logic which drives appeals to organic community is crucially a critique of identity politics. As Piccone specifies, "difference" for the French New Right differs in crucial respects from "difference" within the liberal pluralism associated with certain forms of multiculturalism in the US, which it superficially resembles.[6] Liberal pluralism treats multiculturalism within universalized conceptions of equality and rights. According to Piccone, such conceptions can only have reference to abstracted or alienated individuals, not to groups or communities. These communities, in fact, furnish the only contexts in which individuals can emerge or sustain their existences. Thus no concept of rights or equality can

4. Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right," *op. cit.*, p. 12.

5. Paul Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm," *Telos* 98-99 (Winter -Spring 1994), pp. 10-11.

6. "While American multiculturalism acknowledges the irreducibility of different cultural traditions (or the undesirability of subsuming them all under one predominant cultural model, thus coming very close to the French New Right's "right to difference,") it operates entirely within the context of the post-modern liberal state, thus generating a series of insurmountable contradictions." Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right," *op. cit.*, p. 15.

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be universalized beyond the borders of specific communities, and no universalized concept of rights or equality can effectively be imposed against the expressed will of any particular community's members. Conceptions of rights and equality therefore fail to address, let alone resolve, problems of difference. For difference, as Piccone and de Benoist understand it, is an expression of cultural values and those are the grounds for and not the object of politics: "From the French New Right's viewpoint, cultural values are logically prior to political institutions and, in fact, determine them."[7] Thus there can be no overarching, enforced or administered, guarantees of rights. One may or may not agree with this, or one's agreement or disagreement may be predicated upon the definition of the scope and limits of a phrase like "cultural values" and the "irreducibility of different cultural traditions," which appear in both Piccone and de Benoist. But what, in practice, and especially in the practice of critique with reference to community and to the problem of difference, does this assertion mean?

Difference, like individuals, as Piccone and de Benoist both claim, can be articulated and defended only on the basis of its grounding in strong, organic communities. For both writers difference exists between and not within communities. While they are vague about the actual constitution or possible construction of these communities, both are clear that within its proper borders any community — to be worthy of the name — requires a large degree of internal homogeneity. As

7. Again, Piccone develops his argument concerning the cultural determination of political institutions with reference to US historical specificity: "One need not become embroiled in the intricacies of political theology to acknowledge that, no matter how much its politically correct liberal administration may try to shed so-called 'Eurocentric' biases, the US remains the secularized legacy of the Protestant Reformation. Its basic institutions cannot be cut off from such cultural roots without plunging the entire system into chaos. Even if the state were able to shed all axiological residues, the resulting (allegedly strictly procedural) framework would still presuppose particularistic culture-dependent choices. Bottom line: no matter how politically correct it tries to become (i.e. consistent with liberalism's abstract universalism), multiculturalism remains fundamentally incompatible with the liberal state." Piccone, "Confronting the New French Right," *op. cit.*, p. 15. The US, then, the enemy of all cultural particularity and the home of universalizing and abstracting liberal values which it exports through the impositions of an imperialistic cultural industry, is itself, the product of a culturally specific series of choices and values, here identified with the legacies of the Protestant Reformation. Yet, if universalized conceptions of rights and equalities are themselves particular cultural values (as they no doubt are), then on what grounds are they subject to attack? To admit such universals as disguised particularities is not necessarily, in the terms of Piccone's defense of particularism, to delegitimate them. To argue that conceptions of rights and equality are only legitimate within certain communities and not within others may in theory be true but in practice clarifies nothing. For the crucial question will be how to distinguish between communities and, in any given locale, how to deal with the differences among the local constitutency, some of whom, no doubt, will be found to be sympathetic with or committed to various universals which may clash with other universals across the borders of even within the confines of the community around them. Here is where the problem of politics emerges and it remains linked to certain versions of or problems with difference as they register both between communities and within their internal structures.

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Piccone puts it: "A plurality of cultures can coexist without either destroying or absorbing one another only if embodied in organic communities, not merely isolated individuals. In the latter case, the outcome is not only the gradual erasure of cultural particularity but the very decomposition of individuality, which explains the inextricable connection in the US between cultural homogenization through the culture industry, the rise of the therapeutic industry, and the progressive disintegration of communities. . . . Paradoxically — because of its virulent anti-Americanism — the French New Right's articulation of the concept of ethnicity within. . . federalism and in connection with a notion of participatory democracy within small and axiologically homogeneous local communities unwittingly recycles the original American model."[8] There are two distinct but definitely linked problems with these formulations. First, they posit the existence of axiologically homogeneous local communities now or at any time in the past; second, the idea that destruction or absorption are the only possible results of contact between cultures. The interpenetration and hybridization of cultures has been the rule since the beginnings of civilization. Are there any specifiable political tendencies whatsoever in these ideas of community or democracy? Do they offer anything as a resolution of the problems of power and difference they purport to address?

Piccone recognizes that "there is nothing inherently 'Left' in a call for 'radical democracy' (since such a system is equally acceptable to the Right and conducive to the furthering of their agenda)." But he goes further and accepts what Tocqueville saw as democracy's most pervasive danger, the tyranny of the majority.[9] Once democracy has spoken there seems to be little else to say. Piccone's rigorously relativistic ethos leaves criticism no grounds since the organicity of each community and the logically prior status of its cultural values both determines and legitimates the character of its political institutions. To his credit, he pulls no punches, "radical democracy," he writes, "entails the specter of occasionally. . . having to legitimate slavery, bigotry, etc."[10]

Yet something slips here, since these terms — organic community and democracy — are neither as analytical categories nor as political entities of the same order. Why could "organic" communities not be organized anti-democratically, as fiefdoms, or primal hordes with a single, absolute leader, or constructed so that only some residents within them could participate in the political process,

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8. Piccone, "Confronting the New Right," *op. cit.*, p. 16.

9. Curiously, Tocqueville finds the axiological heterogeneity of the *ancien régime* to be a guarantee against tyranny. He wrote, "I know of no country in which there is so little independence of mind and real freedom of discussion as in America. . . there is no country in Europe so subdued by any single authority, as not to protect the man who raises his voice in the cause of truth from the consequences of his hardihood. . . But in a nation where democratic institutions exist, organized like those of the United States, there is but one authority, one element of strength and success, with nothing beyond it." See *Democracy in America*, (New York: New American Library, 1956), p. 117.

10. Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right," *op. cit.*, pp. 19 and 21.

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or be represented — as in patriarchies or slave systems — so that only a minority of people within their borders could qualify as citizens or even as people? In other words, the appeal to organic communities has nothing intrinsically to do with any notion of democracy or representativeness — as the difference between Athens and Sparta (two definitively premodern and arguably organic communities) makes clear at the very origins of Western civilization. Appeals to organic community fail to address the problems of difference, representation, and power as they function within and not merely between specific locales.

Difference and the problems that evocations of vaguely defined liberal absolutes like rights and equality are meant to address appear most troublingly not between but within communities because the irreducible heterogeneity of common life for the vast majority of the people makes the sources of conflict local. Difference is a local problem. And this makes some of Piccone's formulations seem terribly thin. He writes: "Allowed to control education, housing, welfare and cultural life in general in its own communities, the Christian Coalition will still vigorously condemn secularism, abortion, homosexuality and other non-Christian practices, but it will probably learn to live with them in other territorially defined communities."[11] But within the territorially defined community in which this Christian Coalition might govern, i.e., might assume the power to delimit the character and borders of the community as a Christian coalition according to the ways in which its intellectuals minister this definition, what will be the fate of those Christians who do not identify with that representation or who find themselves excluded by its limits, who do not find abortion or homosexuality intrinsically non-Christian practices? What will happen to non-Christians such as Moslems, Jews, or Budhists? Would their only recourse be migration to other, hypothetical, contiguous communities in which their systems of belief might find expression in the representations of other intellectuals? Do organic communities require ethnic, religious, and racial cleansing to get themselves off the ground as axiologically homogenous entities that might achieve radical democratic structures freed from the politics of representation? Is any community imaginable apart from political acts of representation that seek to construct and define it? Is not the appeal of Serbian nationalists one for an organic community whose axiological homogeneity would be untroubled by the differences of the Croats and Moslems who live within its boarders and who cannot be represented within the ideological constructs of organic community or axiological homogeneity?

Moreover, what of those whose subjectivities are so complexly overlayed and overdetermined, so shaped by contact and conflict between cultures, that there could never be one single, axiological homogeneous community to which they could imagine belonging or one single cultural tradition to which they could lay claim (not even Newt Gingrich's vacuous category of "normal Americans"

11. *Ibid.*, p. 21.

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delimiting representation on the grounds of the political policies he will attempt to enact)? Finally, what are the models of community and subjectivity functioning in these dreams of axiological homogeneity and organic community?

They are representations structured by a ruthless and unreal identity logic every bit as violent in its attempts to relegate conflicts to external differences as any liberal or indeed fascist representation of modern community that they purport to oppose. In fact, Piccone and de Benoist emerge here with a program whose ambitious redirection of the structures and limits of public and private life would have humbled Lenin, a program that might be the climax and not the denouement of the tradition of intellectual Jacobinism that defines modernity itself. For in what sense can "radical democracy" be a "fundamental principle" upon which "everyone seems to be able to agree?"[12] Radical democracy is not, as Piccone himself argues, a value, nor is it a political position; it is a procedural or structural arrangement that is neutral with regard to values, principles, ethics, morals, also political institutions and practices. It is neutral as well with regard to universals. Piccone argues: "If education [for example] has to do, among other things, with the transmission of values, and radical democracy means local self-determination, what can be objectionable to teaching creationism, having school prayers and whatever other locally-mandated practices, unless one introjects a liberalism which necessarily contradicts democracy by positing absolute values beyond direct democratic self-determination?"[13] Radical democracy, without the introjection of a liberal absolute like limited government, may legitimate other absolutes and the most stringently intrusive statism designed to represent the interests and values of what can only be one group within the community as the universal values of all. The particular would then become a universal dominating the several and sundry groups composing any actually existing community in any actual locale. The fact that this identity logic, its imposition of its concept and its exclusion of any deviance, might operate with greater efficiency in smaller administrative units hardly seems comforting.

The concepts of populism, federalism, and local community yield no political traction whatsoever. Radical democracy (as an antidote to Jacobinism and liberal universalism) and organic community (as an antidote to state power and administrative oppression) fail to mesh into a coherent program for either de Benoist or Piccone because they operate on fundamentally different levels of analysis. One does not necessarily entail or enable the other. Appeals to organic community do not necessarily entail radical democracy any more than such appeals entail an abandonment of universalizing values of either the conservative or the progressive sort. What remains a question, no matter how it is imagined, is how those values are represented and implemented practically and ideologically. What remains a problem is the absence of anything like axiological homogeneity without which

12. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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these representations of organic communities have no content whatsoever.

The rearticulation of the problems of power and representation on a more local level does nothing to alter the nature of those problems, nor does it escape the vicissitudes of representation on the subjective, communal, or state level. The community can have no unmediated knowledge of itself, any more than any subject within the community can have unmediated access to consciousness. Thus for Piccone and de Benoist, as for any political intellectual, a certain tendentious gesture of representation is intrinsic to their argument. Their task remains the mediation that is consciousness. For de Benoist one such moment involves the positing of a pre-Christian paganism as a grounds for his representation of the organic community he describes, though such paganism currently exists nowhere. For Piccone, it is the positing of an untroubled legacy of the Protestant Reformation as definitive of community in the US, though alternative representations of US history might suggest the presence of Asian, African, Spanish Catholic, and other groups, identities, and cultures within the various North American communities from the very beginning. Piccone's references to axiological homogeneity are declarative and instrumental rather than descriptive. Both Piccone and de Benoist continue to enact the legislative, constitutive and representational functions of Enlightenment intellectuals.[14]

The representational work of intellectuals remains the place where politics and the idea of community gets articulated. In that articulation, intellectuals must often have reference to categories which function as universal values and fundamental positions. This is particularly true when the problem is cultural and political difference. Attempts to mediate the conflicts difference entails frequently require appeals to at least a provisional sense of the universal. And within as well as between communities, the problem is very likely to be difference. Without difference, which is to say, without conflict, there would neither be a need nor a place for politics. Politics is the absence of axiological homogeneity.

Axiological homogeneity in the form of a certain local universalism nonetheless

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14. Which is ironic for what drives their polemic is less a faith in populism than exasperation with modernity understood as the triumph of intellectuals as either Jacobin projectors or New Class bureaucrats. Piccone wants to escape from the bind of "the old contradiction of liberalism and democracy, and [the] expression of the Left's lingering Jacobin tendency to opt for the former when it becomes necessary to choose between the two." But in doing so, he jettisons the whole project of critique and the entire legacy of the Enlightenment in the attempt to represent a far too simply constructed pre- (or post-) modernity when communities and the individuals within them were or could be imagined to be homogeniously organic. In fact, in attempting to reorient political theory through a moment of anti-Jacobin rigor, both Piccone and de Benoist seem intent on altogether abandoning political theory and the positioning of intellectuals it often presupposes. In doing so, however, they do not escape their own positioning within a debate about intellectuals. Thus, as Carl Boggs makes clear, they continue an age old argument between Jacobin and anti-Jacobin tendencies, an argument among intellectuals not about the immediate ends of political power but about the positioning and authority intellectuals might attempt to claim. Carl Boggs, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Modernity* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1993), p. 15.

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plays a crucial role in the representations of difference and community in many contemporary debates about politics and culture. Both "conservative" and "liberal" critiques of attempts to expand the official canons and pedagogical constructs of tradition in the US depend upon the representation of a contemporary vision of US culture as essentially derived, as Piccone puts it, from the Protestant Reformation and its corollary development the European Enlightenment. Both critiques, therefore, posit a specific version of historical development in which the legacy of some originary community and its values — in the case of the US a Protestant and enlightened one — is in danger of being lost. As for Piccone and de Benoist, the critics posit a specific axiological homogeneity in contrast to an external difference that threatens it. In both cases, a stringent identity logic appealing to an abstract if local universalism delegitimates much that is left out of the representation. Consider, as a case history, two arguments by intellectuals representing conventionally conservative and liberal positions in US politics. In arguments recently advanced by Samuel Huntington and Arthur Schlessinger respectively, a similar representation of the axiological homogeneity of US institutions and culture shapes the polemic and misshapes, as it does with Piccone and de Benoist, the representation of US history. In both cases, intellectuals instrumentalize representations of community and culture to serve particular political ends. In both cases, those ends involve the imposition of a certain vision of local community, one that turns out to be neither simply organic nor precisely local.

Culture and Policy

In important respects, arguments about local communities based upon shared values and assumptions tend to open rapidly on more global prespectives. For example, Huntington's recent attempt to find a rationale for post-cold war US foreign policy assumes, as do Piccone and de Benoist, that culture precedes political institutions and policies. Yet his particular representation of culture is, in itself, a political act rather than a grounding for politics. Huntington, the Director of the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard and a leading theoretician of global politics, attempts to project foreign policy based on his representation of world cultures. In a featured essay on *The New York Times* Op-Ed page and a lead article in *Foreign Affairs Quarterly*, he assumes the essential incompatibility and mutual exclusivity of contemporary geo-cultural spheres in the aftermath of super power bipolarism. These he labels the "West," which he characterizes as modern, liberal, and democratic (especially the US), and the "Rest," which he describes as traditional, theocratic, and authoritarian (especially Islam).[15] He formulates his thesis as follows: "the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the

15. "The Coming Clash of Civilizations or, the West Against the Rest," in *The New York Times* (Sunday, June 6, 1993); "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs Quarterly* (Summer 1993) Vol. 72, No. 3, pp. 22-49.

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dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future."[16] Huntington divides the world into axiologically homogenous, self-contained, and self-identitical spheres. The US, he argues, should work immediately to contain and ultimately to subvert those cultures hostile to "Western values" (especially Islamic cultures) while simultaneously promoting the internal coherence of "our own" culture and forging alliances with those cultures more friendly to "our" view of things (Christian Orthodoxy, for example).

Let us leave aside such simple questions as whether or not Huntington would argue that Christian Orthodox Serbs deserve US assistance in their massacres of Moslem civilians in Sarejevo or Bosnia because their values approximate "Western" values more closely. To those familiar with the neocolonial rationalizations of US foreign policy during the Cold War, the program he advocates is depressingly familiar. He writes: "it is clearly in the interest of the West to promote greater cooperation and unity within its own civilization, particularly between its European and North American components; to incorporate into the West societies in Eastern Europe and Latin America whose cultures are close to those of the West; . . . to limit the expansion of the military strength of Confucian and Islamic states; to moderate the reduction of Western military capabilities and maintain military superiority in East and Southwest Asia; to exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states; to support in other civilizations groups sympathetic to Western values and interests; to strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values and to promote the involvement of non-Western states in those institutions."[17] Huntington argues for this neocontainment policy by evoking not economic interests or ideological antagonism but cultural differences and incompatible "values." Like Piccone and de Benoist, he understands the world as a place where common values define different modes of life. He thus enumerates the "Western concepts" or local "values" he feels "differ fundamentally from those prevalent in other civilizations." These include "Western ideas of individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, the rule of law, democracy, free markets, the separation of church and state," legacies — as Piccone would say — of the Protestant Reformation and the Enlightenment which, he claims, "often have little resonance in Islamic, Confucian, Japanese, Hindu, Buddhist or Orthodox cultures." Thus a reading of liberal universals as local particularities becomes the ideological basis for an aggressive campaign against other particularities bereft of those values, a basis founded in this case not on the universalization of the values in question but on the self-interests and self-preserving entitlements of the community that claims to embody them as its fundamental assumptions.

16. *Foreign Affairs Quarterly, op. cit.*, p. 22.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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First and most crucial, Huntington's argument — like Piccone's and de Benoist's — depends upon a particular construction of "civilizations" or cultures as internally coherent and externally opposed: it depends, that is, upon the instrumentalized deployment of a certain reductive identity logic. It is precisely this monological construction of culture that some versions of multiculturalism have long contested. Both the facts of history and the realities of contemporary life supply the force of this critique. Huntington's mutually constitutive opposition between the "West" and the "Rest" is a dangerous fantasy of the colonizing mind. It rests on little beside media distortion and the profoundly ahistorical tenor of contemporary political discourse in the US.[18] A similar absence of historical specificity is evident in the representations of US communities Piccone advances as well.

In both cases, this is most marked in the separation of cultures from the histories of the peoples it is held to define. Both Piccone and Huntington achieve this separation of culture and history when they assume that culture logically precedes the historical experiences and political expressions of a given community and that cultures can only be annihilated or absorbed through contact. Given the remarkable and long standing heterogeneity of world populations in the "West" and elsewhere, Huntington's uncritical deployment of the term "us" as synonymous with what he unreflectingly calls "Western" culture, is far from innocent. Similarly, Huntington's enumeration of the values he claims to be specifically Western, liberal values which he deploys to legitimate oppressive policies, should make the most determined cultural relativist suspicious because it abstracts both culture and values from the long history of contact, conflict, and exchange fundamental to the process of cultural formation everywhere in the world. In fact, it serves effectively only as the foreign policy rationale for a domestic policy of cultural purgation and repression. The projection of difference abroad is a way of legitimating repression at home. If, for example, the West is the locale of liberal values, a legacy of the Enlightenment and the Protestant Reformation, then other local traditions appearing within its confines may be legitimately silenced so that the West can more perfectly approximate its own pre-established identity. The values that dominate and the traditions to be excluded shift according to which axiology intellectuals represent as the differentiating principle of the community's identity.

The essentialized identity logic and the racialized identity politics subtending Huntington's vision of intercultural global and domestic warfare are precisely what a certain mode of analysis in contemporary cultural studies is meant to contest. If Huntington's assumption of the intellectual's task involves the traditional work of demarcation and differentiation between identities in conflict, the task for oppositional intellectuals may be to demonstrate, with reference to specific histories and

18. For an analysis of how media distortion and the tendency to remove cultural analysis from engagements with history and thereby essentialize the cultures (usually the other culture) in question, see Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

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cultures, that these differentiations, demarcations, and conflicts function within the identities they supposedly construct. The threat to the local values Huntington claims to defend, the battles waged along the fault lines of civilization, may not be external but internal to the local communities of Western society.

Western culture generally and US culture in particular has never known itself apart from the intricate, internal dynamics of cultural conflict and exchange mediated by contested representations. These latter, in fact, have defined it. As Frank Shuffleton puts it: ". . . our mixture resulted from years of confrontation, conflict, negotiation, and cooperation between culturally varied groups of European immigrants, native Americans, and kidnapped Africans. . . "[19] Thus there is no point in US history when the question of a national, cultural identity, usually voiced from the dominant position of Euro-Americans, has not been haunted by the specter of racial and cultural others within US society, the problematics of gender and citizenship, the presence of populations to be exploited, or exterminated, or domesticated and then removed from conscious articulation within the dominant, liberal myth. The ideological dominance of that myth was founded upon and structured around acts of and investments in exclusion that threatened the myth's legitimating force even as they helped to construct it.[20] If, as Ernest Renan remarks in his well-known 1882 address, "What is a Nation,": "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. . . "[21] Forgetting has been especially important in the formation of the dominant US culture, the model of Western culture whose values Huntington wishes to deploy as a basis for aggressive foreign policies. For the exclusionary violence of US history and society accords ill with the liberal rhetoric of republican virtue or progressive democracy which have long been the community's dominant ideological constructs.[22]

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19. "Introduction," in Frank Shuffleton, ed., *A Mixed Race: Ethnicity in Early America* (New York: Oxford, 1993), pp. 5-7.

20. A liberal critic like Arthur M. Schlesinger is compelled to admit that Western culture is the origin of both liberal ideals and crimes against them. In the peroration that closes his book, he writes, "Whatever the particular crimes of Europe, that continent is also the source — the *unique* source — of those liberating ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom that constitute our most precious legacy and to which most of the world today aspires. These are *European* ideas, not Asian, nor African, nor Middle Eastern ideas, except by adoption. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: Norton, 1991, 92), p. 127. Schlesinger never questions the relation between these ideals and those crimes he evokes and what happens when these values — even granted his simplistic ascription of them to a pure entity called Europe or the West — are deployed not only by non-Western cultures but by Westerners like Huntington to rationalize neo-colonial impositions and violence.

21. Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha, (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 11.

22. See J. G. A Polcock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*, *op. cit.*; Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition* and Myra Jehlen, *American Incarnation*, *op. cit.*

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This determined forgetting of history is not the special work of political conservatives like Huntington. In his recent defense of American liberalism as a form of local particularism against what he sees as the threat of multiculturalism, Arthur Schlesinger repeats a frequently heard appeal: "Let us by all means in this increasingly mixed-up world learn about those other continents and civilizations. But let us master our own history first. . . Belief in one's own culture does not require disdain for other cultures. But one step at a time: no culture can hope to ingest other cultures all at once, certainly not before it ingests its own. As we begin to master our own culture, then we can explore the world."[23] And yet, history itself gives the lie to Schlesinger's reasoned appeal. For the history of North America is every bit as mixed up as the contemporary world and is, from before the first, involved intimately with peoples and civilizations from "those other continents" he attempts to exclude. European North America, like the rest of the West, has no history apart from its contacts and conflicts with non-European peoples, traditions, and cultures. There is no warrant in history for assuming — as Schlesinger and many others do — that the "we" who must know "our" culture first in the contemporary US are simply white or only European, nor that there is any point in history when this was the case. In fact, Western culture itself is only meaningful as a history of global expansion, colonization, and exploitation over the last four hundred years makes it a site of conflict.

This was already an old truth when Crevecoeur first gave a now well-known answer to the question "What is an American?" in 1780, the *locus classicus* for American pluralism that Schlesinger, like many American liberals, begins and ends his book by evoking. It remains true today. Remembering the importance of forgetting in the formation of national identities, the corollary suggests that the recollection of the forgotten or repressed violence alters the shape of the self-conscious identity that formed itself through this act of repression. This is why Renan said that "progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality."[24] If Renan's remark is true of the attempt to construct nations as homogenous entities, it is also true of attempts to construct culture generally, and Western culture especially, as organic axiologically homogeneous origins of values. History often explodes the legitimations of identity logic. To demonstrate this, I will offer a more iconoclastic reading of Crevecoeur's crucial text than the one Schlesinger and other liberals typically evoke. I will also show one crucial way in which Huntington's and Piccone's construction of an axiologically homogeneous US offers an abstraction in the place of the concrete particularities of US history. Even in the days before the US became a nation, even during the 18th century colonial experience that Piccone represents as an American model of federated organic communities, difference was a local problem.

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23. *The Disuniting of America*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

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Historical Amnesia: Western Universals and Local Problems

Like Piccone, Schlesinger turns to a Frenchman for perspective on the North American experience. His best-selling critique of multiculturalism as a subversion of liberal US traditions begins and ends by evoking Crevecoeur's portrayal of American identity as a "promiscuous breed," for Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1780) has long been a cherished text for liberal historians who find his expression of precisely those values Huntington calls Western — individualism, liberalism, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, liberty, — especially compelling. Like Huntington and Piccone, Schlesinger claims these values as Western property, a particular "secular legacy of the Protestant reformation." Yet he is also constrained to admit that these local universals originating in Western traditions have been unevenly applied, that throughout history the West in general and the US in particular have failed to live up to their own highest ideals, that many peoples have been systemically excluded from participation in these rights.[25]

As an historian, however, Schlesinger should also note that originally these rights were defined by their exclusivity. Their origin in the 17th and 18th centuries coincides with the origin of the modern West and of liberal democratic culture itself in the emergence of the nation-state and the organization of the bourgeois public sphere that attends it. These developments, which may be traced to the 15th and 16th centuries, coincide with the beginnings of European colonialism. Originally, the West emerged in its difference from and domination of the rest of the world at the moment of imperial expansion and colonial expropriation.

From its beginnings, the idea of the "West" was a complex and conflicted cosmopolitan construct, containing divisions and contestations among heterogeneous populations that mirrored and threatened to disrupt the stability of its own self-conception. The "rights of man" were not only exclusive of women, as Mary Wollstencraft argued, or workers, as Marx asserted, they were also exclusive by categories of race and region, the categories of difference that legitimated the system of colonial exploitation. For example, as fundamental a text for liberals as Locke's *Second Treatise of Government* is marked by a crucial chapter[26] attempting to explain the

25. "Whatever the particular crimes of Europe, that continent is also the source — the unique source — of those liberating ideas of individual liberty, political democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and cultural freedom that constitute our most precious legacy and to which most of the world today aspires." *The Disuniting of America*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

26. John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980) par. 22-24. Locke writes: "Indeed, having by his fault forfeited his own life, by some act that deserves death; he, to whom he has foreited it, may (when he has him in his power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his own service, and he does him no injury by it: for, whenever he finds the hardship of his slavery outweigh the value of his life, it is in his power, by resisting the will of his master, to draw on himself the death he desires." (p. 17). This may be the rationale that in 1669 led Locke, as Secretary to Lord Ashley, to transcribe the Fundamental Constitutions of Carolina which stipulated that "every freeman of Carolina, shall have absolute power and authority over his negro slaves." See, David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1966), p. 118.

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non-application of the laws of nature and reason — the laws of liberty, constitutionalism, and other basic and universal rights — to the slaves held in British possessions.Thus, if such values are "Western," history indicates that they are such only in a complicated, mediated, and conflicted manner.

The literary text with which Schlesinger begins and ends his polemic exemplifies these tensions. As Robert Ferguson observes, Crevecoeur's *Letters* is a crucial and frequently deployed expression of the self-definition of Americans as citizens of a nation of liberal laws, one of the crucial legacies of the Protestant Reformation in which Piccone finds the foundations of US culture. As Ferguson puts it: "The English legal tradition enabled Anglo-American intellectuals to *assume* a visible link between the observance of natural law and the attainment of civic happiness."[27] Indeed, the conception of America as a land of laws and liberal policies is, as Ferguson also points out, something like the nation's founding myth, an "assumption of a connection between nature, order, and positive law."

It is therefore not surprising that Crevecoeur's rhapsodic evocation of new world prospects has struck a sympathetic chord in the hearts of American intellectuals for generations. Of the first impression these prospects must make on a new arrival, his farmer wrote, "it is a prospect which must inspire a good citizen with the most heartfelt pleasure. . . [A] modern society offers itself to his contemplation, different from what he had hitherto seen. It is not composed, as in Europe, of great lords who possess everything, and of a herd of people who have nothing. Here are no aristocratic families, no courts, no kings, no bishops, no ecclesiastical dominion, no invisible power giving to a few a very visible one. . . The rich and the poor are not so far removed from each other as they are in Europe. . . We have no princes for whom we toil, starve, and bleed: we are the most perfect society now existing in the world. Here man is free as he ought to be . . ."[28] In the best known passage of the *Letters*, James celebrates the inclusiveness of this "most perfect society existing in the World," "a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans, and Swedes," and offers a response to the question "What then is the American, this new man?" in purely European terms that Huntington — and in an important sense Schlesinger and Piccone as well — still accept: "He is either," Crevecoeur writes, "a European, or the descendant of a European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country.[29] And yet, as Schlesinger no doubt knows but seems at crucial moments to forget, the mixture of blood in 18th century America is in important respects different than Crevecoeur here admits. For then as now the world was a mixed up place and North America could only be identified as a uniquely European society

27. Robert Ferguson, *Law and Letters in the American Republic, op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

28. J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* ed. Albert Stone (New York: Viking Penguin, 1981), pp. 66-67.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

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by forgetting or delegitimating the Native Americans and Africans who constituted a significant part of its population.

Crevecoeur himself did not quite forget this. For neither the African nor the native American are wholly absent from Farmer James' representation of himself and the New World with which he identifies. If the new world seems a utopia at first glance, a more penetrating vision soon disrupts the Farmer's mood. Later in the book, another well-known passage in which James reports, in a visit to South Carolina, the "melancholy spectacle" of an African slave who, having killed his overseer, hangs suspended in a cage from a tree in a "pleasant wood." James describes the terror this scene inspires: "horrid to think and painful to repeat, I perceived a Negro, suspended in the cage, and left there to expire!" This scene functions like a primal scene that the commonly accepted community identity masks. This is horrid to recollect and painful to tell, yet as if under some enormous compulsion, James relates the awful details of what he has seen and can no longer forget: "I shudder when I recollect that the birds had already picked out his eyes, his cheek bones were bare; his arms had been attacked in several places, and his body seemed covered with a multitude of wounds. From the edge of the hollow sockets and from the lacerations with which he was disfigured, the blood slowly dropped, and tinged the ground beneath. No sooner were the birds flown, than swarms of insects covered the whole body of this unfortunate wretch, eager to feed on his mangled flesh and to drink his blood." Before this scene the Farmer experiences a moment of sublime terror, a moment in which his own identity as a happy embodiment of the community's pluralistic identity, a new man, is put into question by his inability to avoid the sight which arrests him and before which he finds himself — in all possible senses of that phrase: "I found myself suddenly arrested by the power of affright and terror; my nerves were convulsed; I trembled, I stood motionless, involuntarily contemplating the fate of this negro, in all its dismal latitudes.[30] He is arrested because it is not possible simply to add this representation to that of the happy land and the just community he has constructed. Here, apparently, as in Europe, there are also those who unjustly toil and bleed. The new man appears to be only a white man and less new than he seemed at first glance. For this is not merely another aspect of that land which is portrayed here, but one which was always present in the form of its exclusion from the scene he had earlier reported.

The horror of this scene is compounded as the African in the cage speaks to the European on the ground after drinking the water he offers: "Tanky you, white man; tanky you; puta some poison and give me." And in response to the farmer's asking how long he has been hanging there, "Two days, and me no die; the birds, the birds; aaah me!"[31]

The "shocking spectacle" of this man's suffering cannot simply be added as

30. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

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a qualifying instance to the previous representation of a perfect society because it calls into question the basis of that community's happiness. The man has killed an overseer. Given the violence of the system itself, the Farmer's hosts are right to insist, as he reports, that "the laws of self-preservation render such executions necessary."[32] The spectacle of such executions is intended to reinforce and stabilize the specularity of difference in the community: reassuring whites on the one hand by dehumanizing and abjecting its victim and intimidating blacks on the other by its exemplary cruelity. Yet when the slave speaks to the white man he interrupts the carefully demarcated identifications and differences the spectacle is meant to reinforce. The spectacle of the slave's suffering and the words he speaks express and make explicit the violence and confusion at the base and in the origin of the society the Farmer has been celebrating, a violence which simultaneously evokes and threatens the liberal ideals that mask it.

In his exemplification of this violence and in his verbalized demand upon the white man's sentiment, this caged and tortured slave represents an early instance of what James Clifford describes as "a new situation, one in which the . . . Western gaze would be met and scattered."[33] What scatters that gaze, in this case, and the self in which it originates is the fact that acknowledgment of the African's expression requires an admission of the inadmissable and a fundamental alteration of the community's cultural character as Crevecoeur's Farmer attempts to construct it. For the man in the cage, his violent act may well have been one gesture, however tragically thwarted, along what Houston Baker has called the slave's journey back from the chaos of oppression toward self-possession, but for the Farmer his presence and his speech scatters the enlightened individual's sense of himself. For what Crevecoeur here confronts is the implication of an American identity he can neither admit nor reject. He confronts the incommensurability of two ineluctably and violently related parts of his own community and a fault line in his own identity as a member of it. One part holds enlightenment and the rule of law as its ideals, the other depends on tyranny and outrageous violence to protect itself in the name of some of those same values. He cannot admit the other who suffers and speaks without fundamentally altering the logic of his identifications of himself and his community and so he remains transfixed in sublime terror, finding himself arrested before the recognition being forced upon him. "[M]y mind is," as he writes, "and always has been, oppressed since I became a witness to it."[34]

Yet one must be careful not to remove Crevecoeur's text from its own historical context in order to make it the anachronistic emblem of conflicts across boundaries of culture, race, and power that may be more significant now than then. If the world was a mixed up place then, it was not mixed up exactly as it is now. Nonetheless, the spectacle in the woods is not one that can safely be kept

32. *Ibid.*, p. 179.
33. James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture*, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
34. *Letters from an American Farmer*, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

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distant from or contained within the southern landscapes of the new world that Crevecoeur began by describing. In fact, a crucial context for this scene is provided by an incident that occurred not in the somewhat foreign climate and culture of South Carolina, but in the communal life of Crevecoeur's own New York. The dynamics of violence and forgetting in the formation of US cultural identity evident in Huntington's rationalization of a foreign policy that forgets the present diversity and troubled history of the culture he calls "ours" and in Schlesinger's complacent evocation of US pluralism under external attack are already evident in an account of the trial of rebellious slaves in New York City in 1741. Here again, an attempt to export difference is an attempt to manage local conflicts.

Suspended Identities and the Exportation of Conflict

The "Great Negro Plot of 1741," as those events were called by Daniel Hormanden who undertook the intellectual's task of representing them, involved the prosecution of over 150 black slaves and 20 white servants, laborers, and trades people for an alleged conspiracy to burn New York City to the ground, murder the men and rape the women. Opinion is divided as to whether the prosecution brought a conspiracy to light or merely expressed an outbreak of mass hysteria. Contemporary commentators sometimes compare the New York proceedings to the Salem Witch Trials 50 years earlier. The New York trials culminated in 13 blacks burned at the stake, 16 hanged along with 4 whites, and more than 70 blacks along with 7 whites banished after over 6 months of inquiries.[35] This gruesome moment in the early heterogeneity of American society remains little known though in the context of the present discussion, extraordinarily revealing.

The New York where the incendiary rumor of this rebellion spread and the ritual gestures of the trial and the executions occurred was torn by a multiplicity of contending ethnic groups, races, and mutually uncomprehending cultures that jostled each other in Manhattan in the mid-18th century. Old Dutch families whose privileges were rooted in inherited wealth and a system of intermarriages; English imperial administrators, merchants, and colonists; Spanish and Irish Catholics; Portuguese Jews; French Huguenots; Native Americans; slaves; and a few freedmen lived in Manhattan in mutual mistrust, suspicion, and conflict.[36] Though all these tensions played a part in the 1741 panic, anxiety concerning the

35. *The New York Conspiracy by Daniel Horsmanden*, ed. by Thomas J. Davis (Boston: Beacon, 1971), p. vii. Horsmanden was a magistrate at the trials and his day to day account of the proceedings is an invaluable source. The most comprehensive recent account of the Plot is Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor of Revolt: The 'Great Negro Plot' in Colonial New York* (New York: The Free Press, 1985).

36. Thomas J. Archdeacon, *New York City. 1664-1710: Conquest and Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976) esp. chap 2. "The People of New York," pp. 32-57; Patricia U. Buonomi, *Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York* (New York, 1971); and Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor of Revolt: the 'Great Negro Plot' in Colonial New York* (New York: Free Press, 1985), pp. 22-25.

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number and status of the slaves was the primary concern. By 1741 one fifth of the city's population was slaves. The dominant classes feared revolt and the white laborers resented competition.[37] These tensions and conflicts, the strains existing within a community that was not only culturally diverse but hierarchical and exploitative, determined the course of the conspiracy trials. These tensions may be sensed lingering beneath and motivating Crevecoeur's question three decades later, "What is an American?" They give the lie to his affirmations of America's harmonious aggregations of difference.

One may speculate that the reaffirmation of racial difference was an important defense mechanism for the modern slave society, prohibiting the recognition of the violence inherent most clearly in the slave system itself, but also — arguably — structured into the nature of capitalist relations of property and exploitation in general. The absolute grounding of racial difference served as the stabilizing standard against which all other differences in society could be measured and naturalized. The fear of slave revolts, while rooted in the reality of their startling occurrences, was also a psychological fear of the violence in the system becoming manifest and being redirected from the subjects to their subjugators.[38] These material practices and power differentials are what made anxieties about difference within the community so important.

These tensions and fears may be seen in the report of a strange occurrence half way through the trials. The bodies of two victims, John Hughson, the white man convicted as the ringleader and mastermind of this conspiracy "whose crimes," as Mr. Smith averred, "have made him blacker than a negro; the scandal of his complexion, and the disgrace of human nature!" and Caesar, a black ringleader of the group convicted of theft and suspected villainy, having been hung in chains side by side for several weeks, a remarkable change was seen to occur. As Horsmanden, magistrate at the trials and chronicler of these events, described what happened: "the town was amused by a rumour, that Hughson was turned negro, and Vaarck's Caesar a white; . . . inasmuch that it occasioned a remark, that Hughson and he had changed colours." The black man has turned white and the white, black. Having ruled out the agency of poison in Hughson's case, the question that confronts this community and which appears to afford no easy answer is the question of difference: how could one natural agent, the sun, afford two such different effects: "As to the change of complexions in Hughson and Caesar, some imputed it to the influence of the sun; but to that it was objected, it

37. Thomas J. Davis, *A Rumor of Revolt: The "Great Negro Plot" in Colonial New York* (New York: Free Press, 1985), chap. 3. New York had the largest slave population outside Charleston, SC.

38. Herbert Aphteker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: 1943) is still the basic work on this subject. See especially chap. 2., "Fear of Rebellion." See also, Peter H. Wood, *Black Minority: Negroes in S. Carolina from 1670 through the Slave Rebellion* (New York., 1974), esp. pp. 285-326; and on the problem in New York see Edgar J. McMannus, *A History of Negro Slavery in New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1966).

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would be strange indeed that the sun should have two such different effects as to turn Hughson (a white) black, and Caesar (a negro) whitish." (275) The narrative of these events develops its own set of symptomatic ticks in its repeated descriptions of these two hanging bodies. Over and over again,the chronicler feels compelled to emphasize the racial differences. And yet, the objection raised and left unquestioned by Horsmanden — that it would be strange indeed should the sun have such different effects on these different complexions as to change the white black and the black white — assumes that the action of the sun occurs on bodies that are the same and that their similarity includes the very pigmentation of the skin that, in the ideological life of the community, is the mark of difference legitimating the subjection of the one and the freedom of the other.

Given the ideological weight difference of complexion bears in this community, why should the different action of the sun on differently pigmented skin be different enough from the expected to occasion this intensely speculative theorizing, theorizing which seems oddly blind to the very differences it is struggling to reinscribe? In fact, it does not seem clear why the question of difference in the sun's action should occur at all. Arguably the action of the sun — if the sun it be — is not different and incalculable but similar and symmetrical: it changes each complexion into its opposite. This has, in fact, the economical symmetry of a Newtonian natural law. Yet, the members of this community and the narrator of these events seem unable to register this sameness, seem unable not to see these bodies differently in such a way that the very question of difference is neither simply confirmed nor denied, but worried and confused. The question of difference (and therefore the question of this community's cultural identity) itself hangs suspended from the gibbet, and the anxiety that speaks through the community's amazement is the fearful knowledge of differentiation's groundlessness and the consequent illegitimacy and injustice of the system of servitude and the constructions of racial and class identity upon which this society relies.

The possibility that the New York Conspiracy trial opened for the horrified contemplation of New York City's dominant classes was the possibility of a conspiracy that would unite slaves and white members of the lower classes in violence against the system and hierarchy upon which the dominant classes relied.[39] One may speculate that for this reason, as the trial proceeded to the crisis point marked by the transformation of the hanging bodies, the attention of the court was directed further and further from the center of the community and the ungrateful slaves and malicious under classes lodged there, toward outside agitators who offered more comforting modes of explaining the root of the disturbance and more stable versions of difference upon which to build legitimacy and mask violence. Thus the trial proceeds to the prosecution of an Irish soldier, William Kane,

39. The fear of a unity between blacks and poor whites that C. L. R. James notes in the 19th century south, seems already to weigh on the white imagination in 18th century New York. See *A History of Negro Revolt*, pp. 24-25.

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who represented both a personage from outside the community and the satisfying prospect of a Popish plot. Kane, in turn, to save himself, helps to indict and convict a non-juring minister, John Ury, of being a Spanish agent sent to subvert and overthrow the British colonies from within.

To discover a papist in their midst must have provided some psychic relief to the community which, as the reaction to the hanging bodies indicates, had begun to doubt its own justice. Here was an other with whom a state of war could be joined who was safely outside the community and its internal structure. To find a well-educated, white foreign agent at the head of the "black," domestic conspiracy must have been reassuring, distancing the imaginary the trial produced and reflected from the reality of systematic racial and class violence it threatened to make visible. For here the rigors of identity logic display their force. The instability of local differences which this case uncovers is finally resolved by the ideological exportation of difference further and further away from the most vexed issues of racial and class hierarchy within the community by assigning the motives and masterminding of this plot to a Catholic and Spanish conspiracy.

Here we may find an early instance of this habit of mind within the white, American imaginary, of exporting the image of violence from the domestic sphere (where it calls into question fundamental values and legitimating assumptions of the community's axiological homogeneity) to an external arena where they can serve to consolidate the very unity in opposition that the existence of these internal conflicts calls into question. In this historical context, Huntington, Schlesinger, Piccone and others like them, repeat a founding but inadequate gesture of US cultural identity. In 1741 as today, the real threat to the liberal values of the West is to be found within that conflicted and divided entity, along the fault lines of civilization within it. No act of forgetting and no attempt to represent a homogenous identity around an imposed axiological homogeneity no matter what the size of the community imagined can long avoid the necessity of confronting and attempting to negotiate that cultural and political fact in both its material and historical dimensions. One task for critical intellectuals interested in the relation of culture to politics, one legacy of the Frankfurt School then, is to remind "us" of our internal differences and the violence that attends our "enlightenment" by questioning the delegitimating force of any identity logic or constructions of axiological homogeneity which ask we forget them or act as if they do not exist. Piccone and de Benoist, as they resist the problems of contemporary identity politics, yield to the force of a logic that constructs homogenous identities for communities while forgetting to recall the heterogenous construction of each community's members.

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Search for Balance

David Ost

In the 20th anniversary issue in 1988, *Telos* editors continually returned to one theme: *Telos'* marginality. The journal was never part of any movement, political or otherwise, and proud of it. "What united us," writes Frank Adler, was "the experience of pursuing [our] project alone."[1] Paul Breines says *Telos sought* marginality and achieved it twice over: a "dual marginality," he calls it, from the Left and from academia.[2] While this kept *Telos* from the center of policy debates, it also kept it provocative, iconoclastic, brazen. As Breines noted a few years earlier, "*Telos* was the New Left's *schlemiel*, its Good Soldier Schweik, its Yossarian."[3] By stubbornly exploring areas others dared not tread, *Telos* was able to bring the esoteric abstractions of Critical Theory to a New Left shouting about "relevance." By relentlessly asking the annoying questions others would not, *Telos* reflected on the crisis of liberalism before most others even knew there was one. By studying old Europe when everybody else was writing about America or the Third World, *Telos* almost singlehandedly brought East European opposition ideas to a broader public. Sharon Zukin argues that *Telos* did such good work on Eastern Europe *only because* the journal played such a marginal role in American debate.[4] Marginality not only kept the journal fresh, but was essential to its very character. It is hard to imagine a mainstream *Telos*.

Or is it? For as *Telos* enters its next "century," things look quite differently. I realized this as soon as I opened the pages of a recent *New Yorker*. There, in an article on Newt Gingrich and the new Republican Party's agenda,[5] are all the themes and code-words appearing in *Telos* — federalism, community, states' rights, unfunded mandates. And populism? Here too, *Telos* seems alarmingly conventional. Everyone seems to be a populist today — especially the Right. What has happened? Has *Telos* gone mainstream?

Intellectuals rarely admit that they have changed. *Telos* is no different. The turn to Carl Schmitt and the embrace of federalism, are seen as part of *Telos'* ongoing critique of administration and the state. Of course there is much truth to this. The critique of instrumental rationality in the early years has much in common with the attacks on liberalism today; and if the Marxism has disappeared,

1. Frank Adler, "*Telos*, 1968, and Now," in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988), p. 54.
2. Paul Breines, "Recalling *Telos*," in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988).
3. Paul Breines, "Redeeming Redemption," in *Telos* 65 (Fall 1985), p. 156.
4. Sharon Zukin, "Our Eastern European *Telos*," in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988).
5. Michael Kelly, "Rip it Up," in *The New Yorker* (January 23, 1995).

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the articulation of populism as the basis for participatory democracy shows that committment to human emancipation remains.

Yet something *has* changed. Continuities may be evident to insiders, but that is precisely the point: they are evident *only* to insiders, to those who have stuck it out the whole way. To anyone else, the changes are more obvious. To those newer to the journal — I first started looking at as a 17-year old college freshman in 1972, first started understanding it around 1980, and first started writing for it in 1989 — what stands out are not the continuities but the breaks, not the similarities but the differences.

First of all, it is no longer immediately obvious that this is a journal of the Left. Of course such terms are notoriously slippery these days. Still, the concept of "left" indicates at least these five points: a critique of capitalism, antagonism to social hierarchies, sensitivity to the plight of marginalized people, skepticism of state power, and a commitment to broad participation in public life. Only the last two are regularly evident in *Telos* at 100. *Telos* may indeed say some of the same things it said when it was a journal of the Left, but one does not need to be a Marxist to understand how ideas are shaped by the circumstances in which they appear. Repeating today what you have said yesterday when the world outside has changed means you are not saying the same thing. Of course *Telos* was always more anti-state than anti-capitalist. But that was not because we were *pro*-capitalist, but because we took the critique of capitalism for granted. Marx was our starting point. The reason we did not develop the critique of the market was not because we disagreed with it but because others could do it better. Today, when the pro-capitalist Right leads the critique of the state, we have to develop the critique of the market. There is little merit in saying the same thing at all times. Politics requires ongoing clarification.

The problem is that *Telos* has moved out of its marginality, but seems unwilling to face the responsibilities that come with this. *Telos* has in fact become a kind of policy journal. But it has done so only half-way. *Telos* is now routinely crammed with recommendations for the dismantling of all kinds of state programs that allegedly only help the interests of the New Class elite. At the same time, there is an almost complete absence of any systematic analysis of the real implications of such policy recommendations. The problem, in other words, is not that the journal has changed, but that it has not changed *enough*.

Three changes stand out. First, there is a new sense of *political urgency* in *Telos* writings — a new engagement with ongoing political issues. Second, there is a new *interest in real American politics*. Although the heralded "American issue" (first scheduled in 1975 to coincide with the Bicentennial!) never appeared, numerous articles in recent years speak directly to ongoing American policy issues, even if only as "asides" in articles ostensibly directed to European political theory (Carl Schmitt) or European politics (the Greens, the Northern League, federalism). Finally, what stands out is the journal's new *tone*: a new mood, a new

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toughness, anger, and, even more, an exasperation with which it views its critics.

Telos always had a brashness about it. But the nature of that brashness has changed over the years. Ten years ago Breines criticized *Telos* for a "new coldness" he saw pervading the journal.[6] He was speaking about Ferenc Feher and Joel Whitebook, who mocked struggles for justice as being linked to a dangerous "redemptive paradigm" necessarily leading to totalitarianism.[7] Since then, *Telos* has shed those contributors, along with their fear of redemption. Unfortunately, it has not shed this coldness, which today takes the form of insensitivity to the dangers of communitarianism, and a relentless mocking of social programs to help the poor for being tied to a "New Class liberalism" said to be no more than an apology for state domination.

That such coldness should remain is ironic, for today's *Telos* is far more sensitive to the real problems people face. Indeed, in the pages of *Telos*, "redemption" is OK again. But the new redemptive paradigm of "federalist populism" is just as insensitive as the liberal paradigm. Whereas the latter is insensitive to how modernity can be oppressive, the former is insensitive to how communities can be repressive. If yesterday's coldness was due to an acceptance of capitalist modernity, today's is due to a rejection of modernity. Where Breines feared a liberal triumphalism, now we need to fear the triumphant rejection of liberalism. We are increasingly missing the point that liberalism means at least three different things: capitalism, human rights, and the bureaucratic state. The problem is that *Telos* now tends to conflate all three into the latter. This tends to preclude a criticism of capitalism, and a defense of human rights.

The problem lies in the journal's recent unproblematic acceptance of communitarianism, in its attack on the state in favor of the politics of "organic communities." By proposing a federalism where each community is dominated by its own majority, *Telos* exhibits a striking coldness to those not included in these majorities. Coldness matters. When affirmative action programs are not just criticized but mocked,[8] when communitarian violence is defended as better at least than state violence, we lose a chance for serious discussion about serious matters. As Benoist says, "style is decisive. [The] way one does things matters as much as the things themselves."[9] The attempt to undermine the state has led to a style and language often too insensitive to the violence experienced by ethnic and racial

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6. Paul Breines, "Redeeming Redemption," in *Telos* 65 (Fall 1985).

7. See in particular Ferenc Feher, "Redemptive and Democratic Paradigms in Radical Politics;" and Joel Whitebook, "The Politics of Redemption," in *Telos* 63 (Spring 1985).

8. See the nasty review by Hugh Murray (a piece that makes Charles seem like a liberal!), titled "The Case Against Affirmative Action," in *Telos* No. 93, Fall 1992. At one point Murray actually *assumes* the genetic inferiority of blacks, rhetorically asking "what proof [do] liberals have that all races . . . are equally intelligent?" (p. 155). What is such an essay doing in *Telos*?

9. "Three interviews with Alain de Benoist," in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994), p. 207.

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minorities in real communities. And this begets the charge that we have become a "right-wing" journal. Now most of those who say this are just not reading the journal closely (or are reluctant to question old beliefs). But our style *invites* misinterpretations. Even Benoist can say he dislikes "WASP hegemony . . . , too filled with morals and economics, while lacking consideration for minorities and the poor."[10] It is increasingly rare to find such consideration among *Telos* writers. The noisy and bombastic tone, which may have served *Telos* well in the past, needs to be shelved today.

How Did We Get There?

Telos began moving in this direction in the early 1980s, right after the failure of the Solidarity movement in Poland. Coming a scant five years after disillusionment with the victorious communist regimes in Southeast Asia, the failure of the Solidarity movement in Poland was the last straw turning most of the Western New Left toward liberalism and modernity. The *Telos* editorial board split around this issue. The dispute focused around Habermas and the concept of civil society. Whereas Andrew Arato presented civil society as the place where democracy could be salvaged and the market kept under moderate control, Piccone saw it as an embrace of the Enlightenment *Telos* had spent so much time debunking. Arato and his friends left the journal soon afterwards. With no one left to offer a forceful theoretical defense of modernity, it took only a reconsideration of Carl Schmitt to push *Telos* to a more concentrated attack on political liberalism.

Ironically, for all their defense of modernity, civil society advocates also played a role in turning the journal "to the right" with their fierce attacks on the European peace movement. Once again, Poland played a key role, as civil society advocates and the East European contributors (often but not always the same) lashed into the West European peace movement for its unwillingness to denounce martial law in Poland with the fervor it denounced US intervention in Nicaragua. Suddenly, *Telos* was publishing articles (e.g., by Castoriadis) on Soviet totalitarianism that might have appeared in *Commentary*. On this issue, the "Habermasians" and "anti-Habermasians" agreed. Both saw "Soviet totalitarianism" as an enormous danger to the world. But they did so from radically different standpoints: the Habermasians (Arato in particular) because it represented the negation of modernity (identified as freedom), the anti-Habermasians (Piccone in particular) because it represented the logical consequence of modernity (identified as administration).

Although this anti-communism had little to do with American politics, it was too close to Reaganism for it not to be taken by American leftists as an attack on them as well. For American leftists, the Soviet Union was always a bogus issue. Their enemy was Ronald Reagan. The American Left looked at Reagan's rhetoric on the "evil empire" as having nothing at all to do with Europe, and everything to

10. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

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do with Head Start and poor peasants in Nicaragua. Whether this was correct is not the point. They did, however, need allies, and they found them in the European peace movement. Thus, the European peace movement became a *symbol* for the American Left, the kind of movement they wanted to organize at home. The fierce attacks in *Telos* on the Greens and on the peace movement drove away many leftists who might have flirted with *Telos* in the past.

Federalism and Community

Around that time *Telos* began to engage more systematically in issues of American politics. Ironically, it was the turn to Carl Schmitt, particularly his discussion of federalism, that brought this about. In Schmitt, *Telos* found new ideas for participatory democracy and against the bureaucratic state. It also led to the notion of "federal populism," now presented as *Telos'* solution to American problems.

This "federal populism" refers to a political and economic system in which binding decisions are made at the local level, where policies are generated and accepted by small communities, undertaken in the interests of "honest, hard-working" citizens. Above all, however, "federal populism" means the elimination of the large, redistributionist state. Although it is often difficult to tell what of this program is supposed to be meant for the US and what is meant for Europe, particularly Italy, where the Northern League has received much favorable treatment, "federal populism" is clearly meant to be a desirable solution to contemporary problems caused by global corporations and the large state. As Piccone describes it, federalism "allow[s] maximum possible autonomy to the constituent elements whose fundamental units will have to be sufficiently small to permit direct democratic participation."[11] "Populism," meanwhile, seems to mean defense of the values of "hard-working" citizens increasingly left out of new global arrangements. The emphasis on "hard-working" is meant to symbolize republican values.

Despite the many disagreements in *Telos*, there seems to be some consensus that the main problem is contemporary liberalism's increasingly inability to sustain itself, both financially and morally. Its financial crisis stems both from social mobilization and the desire for lower taxes. The creation of the welfare state may have stabilized liberal democracy, but the twin notion of rights and entitlement at the heart of the welfare state led to an explosion of demands by other groups. Unable to foot the bill, the state turned to deficit financing as a principle, resulting in an unmanageable debt crisis. The moral crisis, meanwhile, stems from liberalism's disregard of local particularities, and is exacerbated by skillfully magaged campaigns against social redistribution and the idea of a walfare state. Johnstone offers perhaps the best case against universalist liberalism, even as he defends its foundations.[12]

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11. Paul Piccone: "Beyond Pseudo-Culture? Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts," in *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993), p. 10.

12. Frederick Johnstone, "Quebeckers, Mohawks, and Zulus: Liberal Federalism and Fair Trade," in *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992).

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Universalism, or bureaucratic rationality, he says, crushes people by identifying their peculiar customs as something to be eradicated. Fearing differentiation, liberalism seeks to homogenize people, and while people are willing to accept that in return for economic growth, as during the first three postwar decades, they are unwilling to accept this at times of decline. So people today are resisting the state, whether it seeks to sensitize people to the realities of oppression, as seems to anger "white males" in the US, or seeks to privatize the economy and allow the unfettered expansion of capitalism, as angers non-elites in post-communist societies.

What is contentious in *Telos* today is not so much the critique of liberalism as the proposed "federal populist" solution, calling for power to be devolved to "organic communities." The problems with communitarianism are well-known: it leads easily to racism and other exclusions; it leaves existing hierarchies intact; its rejection of the state leads to free reign for the market which, in the age of globalism, is increasingly free of any kind of rules whatsoever. Instead of tackling these problems head-on, however, the tendency has been to dismiss them, and to consistently make the case for federal populism almost as if these criticisms did not exist. The new communitarianism is defended on many levels: The state cannot solve the problems it has created. The very attempt to solve problems leads to even worse ones. State intervention is nothing but the legitimation of New Class power, imposing rationalistic professional hierarchies over communities presumed to be too dumb to take care of themselves. In fact, say populists, people can take care of themselves just fine.

What does it mean to defend "organic community" today? Objectively, of course, there is no such thing as organic community in this era of unprecedented global mobility of people and capital. Capital mobility carries homogenizing imperatives that rob communities of their particularities and their ability to set their own rules, while the mobility of peoples means that communities' traditional cultural and religious norms can no longer be democratically sustained. Indeed, this is precisely what has people so upset: they *long* for an organic community that global capitalism has taken away.

And that is precisely the point: the market is far more responsible for the demise of community than the state. Communities have been destroyed precisely because they have been constructed as places compatible with an ethic of capitalist accumulation. Yet the state is certainly the easier target. The political "merit" of capitalism is that it is very hard to mobilize anger against it: since impersonal market imperatives determine outcomes, no one is to blame. The heavy hand of the state, however, is there for all to see, whether in the votes of Congress, the decisions of judges, or the actions of the Politburo. It is natural that anger against the loss of community is directed chiefly at the state. But unless the attack on the state is simultaneously an attack on the market, restoring community is impossible, and *pursuing* the restoration of community will be dangerous.

The Republican Party is full of populists and communitarians who identify the

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state alone as the enemy of community. *Telos*' problem is that it is too often ready to agree. Federal populism is presented as a program directed exclusively at the redistributionist state. The danger, of course, is that people will become so galvanized by the attack on the state that the demagogues will succeed: the redistributionist state will be dismantled while the market remains intact. All the old problems will remain, but people will not know whom to blame. At that point the right-wing parties will produce "internal enemies" to blame — "aliens" preventing communities from being "real" communities. This is what is already fueling much of the populist anger today. Organic community cannot be restored, but demagogues will ride their way to power by promising to do so.

Telos has not been completely blind to the problems of communitarianism. Although only Ken Anderson and, more recently, Frederick Johnstone have developed the critique at length,[13] even the defenders of communitarianism occasionally recognize the problems involved. Communitarianism, writes Piccone, is frequently based on "exclusionary qualifications [that] are routinely deployed in defense of privilege and to perpetuate the oppression of weaker groups."[14] And "the Holocaust itself," note Piccone and Ulmen, "was carried out on the pretense of reconstituting an organic (Aryan) community whose particular values were allegedly being homogenized out of existence by 'Jewish cosmopolitanism'."[15] These and other criticisms ought to be taken seriously.[16] Unfortunately, such lines are usually little more than throw-away passages glossed over at once. But they need to be taken seriously. We need a much more sustained analysis. For example, to what extent is communitarianism even a real alternative? Why will not politically autonomous communities themselves become quasi-states, whose bureaucratic authority will then have to be whittled down in the interests of the next line of oppressed communitarians? What about the predictable tendencies

13. See Ken Anderson's comments in "Roundtable on Communitarianism," in *Telos* No. 76, Summer 1988. Also, Frederick Johnstone's "Quebeckers, Mohawks and Zulus: Liberal Federalism and Fair Trade," in *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992); and his "New World Disorder: Fear, Freud and Federalism," in *Telos* 100 (Summer 1994).

14. Paul Piccone, "Beyond Pseudo-Culture?: Reconstituting Fundamental Political Concepts," in *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993), p. 10.

15. Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen, "Re-Thinking Federalism," in *Telos* 100 (Summer 1994), p. 8.

16. In one of his rare acknowledgments of why communitarian populism, if instituted today, could be a disaster, Piccone notes that "most of today's communities are, by and large, what dismissive liberals say they are: disintegrated aggregations of abstract individuals colonized by the culture industry, politically impotent and economically dependent on the whims of a socially irresponsible multinational capital concerned primarily with the infamous 'bottom line'." ("Beyond Pseudo-Culture?", in *Telos* No. 95, Spring 1993, p. 11). The article on which he bases this assessment ("On Really-Existing Communities — Organic or Otherwise," by Louise Formann and Emery Roe, in the same issue) is the *only one* article to appear in *Telos* in recent years that subjects newly-idealized "organic communities" to the relentless critique they deserve.

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for communitarianism, particularly in the context of a declining market economy, to tend to tribalism? Why is it a truism, as communitarians claim, that the evils resulting from small communities are always less evil than when large states do them? Asking these questions does not mean trashing the whole concept. After all, the nation-state *is* in crisis; communities *are* becoming more powerful. But if this evolution is not to just make us nostalgic for the past, we have got to figure out how to offset the all-too-predictable tendencies. Raising the specter of communitarian violence is usually met by the feeble response that there are no guarantees in life. But demanding analysis does not mean demanding guarantees.[17]

Community, Power, and Anger

The problem with presenting communitarianism as some natural form of democracy is that it disregards the extent to which really existing communities have hierarchies and inequalities already built into them. Grounding power in "community values" does not so much liberate people from the state, as bind them to existing oppressive hierarchies. It should be obvious that local elites appeal to communitarianism precisely to defend the hierarchies that already exist. Local elites embrace community precisely when their control over communities are eroding. This does not mean there are not plenty of unnecessary bureaucratic rules that need to be overhauled. But such empirical excess hardly justifies a call for the devolution of all power to communities. Too often, communitarianism is simply a cover to freeze social relations from a change in the community itself. In the 1950s, "states' rights" was an attempt to prevent the changing nature of the Southern community from affecting the politics of that community. In the name of states' rights, the power arrangement produced by Jim Crow would have been frozen to prevent it from reflecting real changes in the community. Today, communitarianism has great appeal in communities becoming ethnically diverse. To cite one recent example, the religious Right has pushed through new school censorship rules in Fairfield County, Virginia, just as its minority population has increased nearly ten-fold in the past two decades.[18] The threatened authorities grab the communitarian banner just as the community changes. Acceding to these demands is only a way of maintaining old power relations, and has nothing to do with empowering "the community." Defending community thus often means sanctioning existing hierarchies and complicity in the repression of communities within the community.

From *Telos* discussions, one would think that communities exist apart from

17. When George Will writes that " 'states' rights' is no longer encoded racism," he at least grants that it once was. ("Gearing for historic month on the Washington scene," syndicated column, in *Ithaca Journal*, January 2, 1995.) Yet *Telos* hardly even seems to make the "once was" concession about populism.

18. Meredith Tax, "My Censorship — and Ours," in *The Nation* (March 20, 1995), p. 374.

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the market. In light of endless talk about the "therapeutic Left" capturing the state to serve its own "New Class" interests, or even of "minorities" using the state to defend themselves against local majorities, it is worth recalling that the first large-scale state intervention came about not because local communities were oppressing blacks and other minorities (though given what pioneer communities did to Native Americans, perhaps it should have), but because market power was destroying communities. It was the Ludlow Massacre in Colorado that first brought federal troops to occupy a town.[19] When the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, responding to a 1914 strike by hiring thugs who soon killed some 67 people, including women and children, popular pressure forced President Wilson to send in federal troops. While Wilson hardly acquitted himself admirably — the state promptly took the side of the strikebreakers — the point is that unregulated market relations make such a mockery of the notion of community that they invite state intervention.

The pervasive social anger that has so transformed Western politics in recent years in due above all to capital mobility that drives down wages. Many communities today have become dependent on highly exploitative, low wage jobs because of the way big corporations have deformed the economy to serve their interests. A recent report noted the existence of some 2000 sweatshops in New York State alone! Such problems are not caused by state intervention, and they cannot be solved by community power. These blights on the community result simply from the play of the market, from large corporations which "foster price competition among the small contractors, . . . all but forcing them to cut corners and underpay workers to obtain contracts and remain in business."[20] Elsewhere in the country, mining, poultry, and agricultural businesses undermine community solidarity. Communities, in other words, are destroyed not by the state but by big business.

Meanwhile, the lack of employment alternatives, along with the absence of legal guarantees for organizing trade unions, deprives people even of their ability to direct their anger where it belongs. Where capital is so mobile, and when people can be fired for protesting to management or for trying to organize a trade union, it is difficult to marshall popular anger against business. The system is constructed in such a way that such anger simply does not pay. Here is where a generation of government-supported union-busting has had its impact. One does not have to embrace "rational choice" theory to grant that in such an environment it is simply not individually rational to express anger at business. This is why the Right in the US has become so strong. People need something *other* than business to blame for tough job conditions, capital flight, declining economic security. And the Right provides not one but two plausible "others": the state and the poor, both

19. Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 152.

20. "Despite Tough Laws, Sweatshops Flourish," by Alan Finder, *New York Times* (February 6, 1995), pp. A1, B4.

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allegedly sucking wealth from "communities" of "decent hard-working people."

Racism and bigotry are responses of beleaguered communities trying to hold onto something when it seems that everything is slipping away. They are a skewed and distorted response to economic changes — deindustrialization, uncompetitiveness, globalization — that make people uneasy, anxious, and fearful. Anti-statism is a politically inadequate response insofar as it proffers the *wrong enemy*. For if the federal government were abolished tomorrow, all of the economic problems of global capitalism would remain. Since the state is not to blame for all this, doing away with the state will not soothe the anger. Here is where it is so easily diverted into "substitute enemies." That is why we should be cautious about communitarianism.

Parties and ideologies become strong by organizing people's anger at a specific target. But it makes a difference where people direct their anger. The advantage of social democracy and other forms of political liberalism over populism and communitarianism is that the former structure conflicts along class lines, in an abstract and thus non-exclusionary way, while the latter promote tribal affiliations that pit one group of citizens against another. Anti-statist critiques are potentially dangerous because they easily, and inevitably, become synonymous in some people's minds with attacks on the poor. Indeed, anti-state arguments have always had a subtext of anti-poor arguments, since every state — whether liberal welfare, social democratic, communist, fascist, corporatist, military authoritarian, or Islamic fundamentalist — *always* seeks to appear as the defender of the poor, and always does some things on behalf of the poor. (How else to maintain legitimacy?) So when Southern states declared Washington their enemy in the 1950s, many Southern whites understood it to mean that blacks, whom Washington tried to protect, were their enemy. Class-based critiques lead to a more inclusive polity precisely because they target their enemies on an abstract rather than concrete basis. Unlike nationalist, communitarian, religious, racial, or ethnic antagonisms, which exclude whole categories of people from citizenship on the basis of attributes one can do nothing about, class-based antagonisms target only an abstract distributional arrangement as the problem. Thus, they can be resolved by adjusting the economic system, rather than, say, by expelling Moslems from Bosnia.

Piccone and Ulmen throw in the towel on the class struggle claiming that now everything is based on politics rather than economic power. In their view, economic conflicts between labor and capital are exclusively part of an old class cleavage, replaced now by "political conflicts between those possessing a 'cultural capital' redeemable as social and political power and those with mere 'cultural liabilities'." The struggle today is not between a "Left favoring egalitarian redistributive policies and a Right committed to defending existing privileges and social inequalities," but one between "centralizers committed to an extension of the state redistributive apparatus allegedly meant to solve all social problems . . . and populists committed to local autonomy, fiscal austerity and participatory

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forms of democracy."[21] This said at a time when continuing corporate downsizing is leading to widespread fear and anger by putatively middle class families now discovering their middle class security was built on sand. One does not have to nurse fantasies of a heroic industrial working class liberating the masses at the barricades to see that economic conflicts remain absolutely central. Economic issues are what is driving the crisis today. Heuglin draws attention to this in a recent piece, where he argues that the rhetoric of federalism is a ploy by rich communities to keep the poor communities from laying claim to part of their wealth.[22] Piccone and Ulmen respond the same way they do to all stories about nasty communitarianism: they would prefer not to hear it. "Every principle can be abused," they write. "This is hardly sufficient as a critique." But Heuglin's point is that in a market economy the principle *cannot avoid* being abused. As he points out, the conditions leading to abuse are none other than the everyday economic realities that all communities actually face. Given an economic system in which big capital dominates *all* small communities, abuse is essential rather than accidental. It is built into the society in which we live.

One of the problems with *Telos'* New Class critique is that it is too conspiratorial. It ignores the very compelling reasons why intellectuals decided they needed to get involved in the first place. Even Christopher Lasch's *The True and Only Heaven* suffers here. He makes a wonderful case for the cynicism of professional elites, believing that they alone have knowledge and that the masses are dumb. Yet he never tries to show just why it is they might have thought that way. And yet the material in his book shows more than that: demonstrating the empirical basis of such a view of "the masses." For Lasch shows, as have numerous other historians, how it is that the old elites — let us call them the "Old Class" — in their mad dash at capital accumulation, systematically deprived people of their autonomy, property, self-sufficiency, and dignity. Is it not plausible to expect that such sweeping attacks have an effect? Is it really just a rationalizing New Class excuse to say that in a modern capitalist world people need some guidance? To point out that many people use this conclusion to legitimate their own rule does not invalidate the conclusion itself. That is an empirical question. Fortmann's and Roe's empirical account lends support to the argument.[23] For the conclusion to be refuted, accounts such as theirs must be refuted. Saying this is simply New Class apologetics just will not do.

The federalist project seems to be frought with contradictions. For example, what is really supposed to happen to market losers under federalism? The hard-working, family-values type communities of the federal populist future will have

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21. Piccone and Ulmen, *op. cit*, p. 9.
22. "Federalism, Subsidiarity, and the European Tradition," in *Telos* 100 (Summer 1994).
23. Louise Fortmann and Emery Roe, "On Really Existing Communities — Organic and Otherwise," in *Telos* 95 (Spring 1993).

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two choices: they can either take them on as wards of the state, recreating all the problems we are allegedly trying to escape, or consign them to their fate of marginality, leaving them hungry and homeless, thus creating a social meanness destructive of the new communitarian ethic. Of course, it can also choose to institutionalize the marginal — throw them in orphanages and prisons — but this only brings back the big state with a vengeance, since prisons require more state funds than welfare, and lead to state-dependent communities in the rural towns where jails are usually built. It will probably not take long before federal populist communities see the wisdom of some form of class-based Affirmative Action, and pass a few rules to make it possible.

In the new defense of community, the notion of hegemony has disappeared entirely. In this new version, values are generated entirely from within, with neither old elites nor New Class intellectuals teaching the regular people how to think. In this version, nothing can be taught: "Only if one's society, community, nation or federation happens to have *internalized* certain norms will they be followed."[24] Indeed, community values here seem to be generated in something like a Habermasian world of rational discourse! In reality, however, norms are imposed all the time. They are forced on children through socialization, on adults through cultural apologists (i.e., official political correctness). And we internalize these norms until other norms are imposed instead. Politics is a struggle to impose one set of norms or another.

Black students entered Little Rock high school, and James Meredith entered the University of Alabama, not thanks to changed internalized norms but thanks to state intervention on their behalf. Of course, things have certainly changed today. But that is precisely the point. Racist politics do not win in the South today because new norms were imposed by Washington. Only under the pressure of external constraints did internalized norms begin to change. Indeed, the only reason federalism makes any sense today is not because state intervention failed, but because it *succeeded*. Even Newt Gingrich concedes this point, when he grants that "liberal democrats ended segregation."

Southern politics moved away from racism because strong state intervention rendered racism a political dead-end. Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus is a case in point. Faubus, who led the campaign to keep blacks out of Little Rock High, never wanted to make race his central issue. He had come to power as a populist, defending the "little man" against the monied interests. Arkansas community values, however, made it necessary for Faubus, like George Wallace, to make race his defining issue. Both of them moved away from racism only when Washington's intervention made racism a dead-end. The state forced the community to accept new laws, new ground rules.

The point is that there are always ground rules, which are themselves a form of power. If the state did not interfere, the alternative was not "the community"

24. Piccone and Ulmen, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

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democratically deciding what to do. Instead, the old elite would decide, and the people, connected to these power structures through ideological habit and patron-client relations, could be counted on to "democratically" agree. State intervention does not introduce power; power is present in every "organic" community. The state only introduces new ground rules. One may oppose those new rules. But to do so in the name of "community" is usually an ideological mystification intended to disguise the power one prefers.

The East European Telos

One of my points so far is that *Telos* needs to be more aware of economic issues. For example, since today's "new populism" is driven by economic anger, federalism is not likely to be much of a solution to anything unless it is accompanied by a regulation of capital, which communities may not be able to do on their own. Dealing with economic issues is also crucial, however, for another reason: to keep the East European *Telos* alive.

Up to now, *Telos*' success as a journal of East European politics and thought was due to its thoroughgoing critique of the bureaucratic state. Liberal academics saw Eastern Europe as a place where strong states provided economic growth and social welfare guarantees, just like all good states were supposed to do, and they could not imagine that political opposition would bring it down.[25] *Telos* saw Eastern Europe as a place where bureaucratic state dictatorships fought continually with a population needing and wanting autonomy, and we knew that society would triumph. It was our critique of the bureaucratic state that allowed us, almost alone among Western periodicals, to look at social actors as the key players during the communist era, and thus to deal with the real social movements that would bring the system down. (As one prominent East Europeanist has written, *Telos* is virtually the only journal dealing with Eastern Europe about which it *cannot* be said that it failed to anticipate the events of 1989).[26]

Today the situation is completely different. The main problems facing today's Eastern Europe stem not from a strong bureaucratic state — if anything, the state is not strong enough — but from an economic sector literally out of control, engaged in a ruthless process of primitive capital accumulation, and requiring democratic legitimation for it as well. *Telos* can maintain its East European orientation only by moving from the critique of the state to the critique of the economy. The post-communist political future will be shaped not by those fighting the state but by those resisting the market. The old critics who shaped our discussion in the

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25. Samuel Huntington maintained his awe of the communist state as late as 1984, when he wrote that East Europe was one of the few places in the world *not* likely to undergo democratic transformation any time soon. See his "Will More Countries Become Democratic?" in *Political Science Quarterly*, No. 99 (Summer 1984).

26. See Daniel Chirot, "What Happened in Eastern Europe in 1989?", in Chirot, ed., *The Crisis of Leninism and the Decline of the Left* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), p. 32 n. 60).

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past are largely irrelevant today. (Zukin pointed to the problem already in 1988, when she said that most of what *Telos* was publishing "could easily be absorbed in a liberal framework").[27] The most theoretically interesting writing in contemporary East Europe comes not from the old civil society theorists, who have largely become apologists for liberalism, but from economic critics of liberalism and the market, who understand what motivates political unrest today.[28] This approach is also the most politically influential. Jacek Kuron, for example, became a political power in post-communist Poland only when he ended a flirtation with neoliberalism and recognized the need for a new contract between state and society. He is likely to run for president in 1995 with a theoretically interesting vision combining the social democratic principle of a state pact with labor, with a "post-liberal" notion of transferring power from the state to organized social movements and local communities.

Unfortunately, Kuron's proposals are rather vague. He has not written up these ideas with the power or elegance of his texts of the 1970s. Neither have others. Indeed, one reason *Telos* will not be able to play the kind of role in relation to East Europe as it did in the past is that there are not many theoretically interesting texts actually coming out of there right now. When they do, however, they will be much different than in the past. And they will not at all have the anti-state focus of those in the past.

Interestingly, most of the innovative writing in Eastern Europe is by those who identify themselves explicitly with the Left. There may be interesting New Right movements in Western Europe, but not in the East. And the chief reason is that it continues to focus on the state as the enemy. Six years after the collapse of the old regime, the East European Right remains mired in a politically boring, theoretically stifling, and increasingly irrelevant anti-communism. Its first move after 1989 was to identify communism as modernity, and to argue that the only way to truly root out communism was to root out all the modern cultural innovations it brought with it — such as secular schools, co-ed college dorms, separation of church and state, the idea of a free press. Since this did not get too far with the public, it turned to a more angry political anti-communism. Today, despite all the signs of a capitalism run amok, the Right shouts about the "persistence of communism." Never mind that today's "communists" love the market, fear Russia and, far from supporting world revolution, oscillate in their foreign policy options only between ethnic nationalism and a desire to join NATO. As the Right sees it, "communists" (often called "aliens" or "Jews") run the banks, industry, the media, the state bureaucracy, and every other institution the Right coughs up as the reason life for average people is still so hard. This sorry analysis generates an equally sorry program: politically, the Right demands "lustration;" economically,

27. Sharon Zukin, "Our East European *Telos*," *op. cit.*, p. 51.

28. See, for example, the work of Kazimierz Kloc, Teresa Kuzzynska, and Piotr Martyniak in the special section on "Capitalism in Poland" in *Telos* Summer 1992 .)

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it demands "true capitalism" (i.e., the kind that makes everybody wealthy). Just as anti-statism is no basis for political success in post-communist society, it is also no foundation for an East European *Telos* today. We need to keep this in mind as we enter our "next century."

Where to Now?

1) Stop adopting concepts like federalism and populism and start subjecting them to rigorous critique; 2) Clarify where we differ with other contemporary critics of liberalism; 3) Forget the tired view that politics is just statism or communitarianism and start thinking about the ways in which power can be devolved to communities *without* generating the familiar problems of provincialism. In other words, we need to think more about real policy issues.

The attraction of some "paleoconservatives" to *Telos* is something that should give us pause. We need to ask why, if these communitarian ideas are so good, are people with whom we have so little in common, so sympathetic to them? In other words, we need to be aware of the ways in which these ideas can mean something other than what we want them to mean. *Telos* is not used to doing this. "Artificial negativity" never did catch on with the media. Neither Republicans nor Democrats ever did pick up on "phenomenological Marxism." With federalism and communitarianism, however, we are right in the middle of the mainstream. In itself that is no problem. Maybe this is a real chance to help shape a new political agenda. But in that case, the role for *Telos* should not be that of mere cheerleader, forever "introducing" these new ideas, as the journal has done for a couple of years now. Rather, we need to *interrogate* the concepts, to think carefully about their implications, to see how they can be so easily abused. This is not a matter of securing guarantees. It is a matter of anticipating and confronting the problems now, in theory, so we do not have to be compromised in practice. Liberalism, even state intervention, has protected too many real people from real violence done in the name of communities to be toppled lightly.

It is not enough to say that Right and Left have no meaning anymore. The *old* meanings of Right and Left are increasingly obsolete, but communitarianism has its own Right and Left, and this battle needs to be fought out. Piccone is right when he says that "the New Right needs to be confronted head on rather than excluded by pretentious appeals *ex cathedra*. An intellectually honest Left," he adds, "cannot do otherwise."[29] So let us confront them, not join them in a chorus.

What are the differences? Leftists embrace a communitarianism aimed at reducing social hierarchies and tyrannies of majorities. The Right likes communitarianism because it sees there assurances of *maintaining* hierarchies and *allowing* majorities to assert themselves. The hierarchies the Right embraces are the so-called "natural" ones, such as gender and property. Indeed, central to conservative

29. Paul Piccone, "Confronting the French New Right: Old Prejudices or a New Political Paradigm?" in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994), p. 6.

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thinking is a notion of "naturalness" which is precisely what an "intellectually honest Left" must challenge. What kind of participatory democracy is possible when participation is restricted in such ways? The reason today's Right often sounds like yesterday's Left is that it too claims to want to defend the oppressed. The difference is that it identifies the oppressed as the generic, decent, hard-working white male. The point is not that such people are not oppressed. The problem is the category itself, and its implications. Many white males are facing a difficult time today. But they are oppressed not because they are white and not because they are male. Defining the victim in such terms is a not-so-subtle way of enforcing new types of domination more to the liking of the political Right. It is also a way of preventing the emergence of social cleavages based around economic notions. Today's Right defends the oppressed, and champions communitarianism, from a cynically common-sensical perspective that leads not to participatory democracy but to domination by new propertied elites supported by dupes fighting the wrong enemy.

The new republican ethos — championed by so many different political tendencies today, including *Telos* — seems in some ways to be a return to the Old Left with its vigorous defense of virtue, strength, militance. But in this regard liberalism has the clear advantage, and any Left today has to learn from liberalism. For what makes a Left a Left is not just its commitment to the strong and oppressed but to the weak and oppressed. Not simply to "take care of them" (though sometimes it means this too) but to help them get on their feet — just as the now-derided welfare policies have so often done. The Left has never completely written off classic republican principles. It has only learned, as it needed to learn, that not everyone can at every moment be a classic republican, with all the requisite values of dignity, autonomy, and independence. This is particularly true in a market society. Sometimes the state has to provide some help. At the same time, it is inaccurate to say that the Left wants to take care of the weak while the Right wants to help them help themselves. With its appeal to "natural" hierarchies, the Right *defines* numerous persons as weak, and wants them to submit to the patronizing assistance of the community, thus leaving existing hierarchies intact. It is the Left that usually wants to help the weak help themselves — against the therapeutic supervision of "natural" community hierarchies. All this does not mean that *Telos* should simply sever the connection with all the libertarians that are finding us interesting these days. The interaction with the Right is a fruitful one. But it will be most fruitful if it helps us understand where exactly we are different from them, and why.

Sam Francis, the former Pat Buchanan speech-writer now with the *Washington Times*, was admirably clear about all this at the *Telos'* December 1994 populism conference. For where recent discussion in *Telos* shows we are still worried about the dangers of communitarian reaction, Francis pointed out that communitarian "mobs" are precisely where the right places its greatest hopes. Tired of *Telos'* defense of populism but not its "dark side," Francis made it clear that the Right has no problems accepting both. "For us," he said, "it is precisely the dark

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side of populism — its xenophobia and provincialism — that functions as the protective shield of the community against the therapeutic Left." Far from desiring any safeguards against nasty and vicious communities, Francis champions such viciousness as the safeguard against the state.

Positions such as this show how much we are indebted to modernity after all. *Telos'* search for an anti-modern Left fails here, just as all attempts to forge such a Left, from William Morris to the radical eco-Greens have failed. The search for a new politics does not mean rejecting "liberalism" for "communitarianism." One cannot resist the nastiness smuggled in under the name of community except by appealing to the political principles of modern liberalism. As Johnstone writes, "there will be no principles in terms of which to criticize them, no mechanisms in terms of which to resist them." He continues: "One cannot criticize postmodernism for being relativizing and trivializing, and then dismiss human rights on the ground that they are universalizing and 'totalizing.' Surely human rights merit more than a few dismissive comments about the 'terminal' problems of liberalism." It is not *Telos'* job to jettison one absolute ("state") for another ("community"). To quote Johnstone one more time, "Balance, not universalism, is the issue."[30]

How then do we get to that balance? Instead of either deifying or vilifying "community," seeing it as either our promise or demise, we should be engaged in trying to figure out what exactly can help us eliminate, or at least minimize, the abuse it engenders. This does not mean we rush headlong into statism. The discussion of community may be new for *Telos*, but many leftist scholars have been working on precisely these kind of questions for a long time. Thus, Christopher and Hazel Gunn, for example, have written about a community-oriented economic strategy that bypasses, and potentially erodes, the power of big capital.[31] Even some "rational choice" approaches are useful for thinking about how communities might become a place of participatory democracy. Mieke Meurs, for example, notes that communities are too often *not* the place of cooperation that communitarians want them to be, but then goes on to ask just how "cultures of cooperation" might be promoted.[32] The merit of this approach is that it *begins* with the bad news about communities, and takes this as a problem to be solved, without state intervention. Meurs argues that communities are non-cooperative because of certain market rules that encourage non-cooperation, and discusses the possibility of other rules and traditions that may encourage cooperation. Other economists, such as Elinor Ostrom, also look at the institutional conditions of

30. Frederick Johnstone, "Quebeckers, Mohawks and Zulus: Liberal Federalism and Fair Trade," in *Telos* 93 (Fall 1992), p. 8.

31. *Reclaiming Capital: Democratic Initiatives and Community Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

32. Mieke Meurs, "Market Socialism as a Culture of Cooperation," in *Politics and Society*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (December 1994). This entire issue is devoted to criticism of John Roemer's *A Future for Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994).

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cooperation and community.[33] Of course, it is not only economists doing this kind of thinking. Robert Putnam also looks at how cooperation is organized in communities, noting that some communities, with strong civic traditions, cooperate well while others do not cooperate at all.[34] The point is that there is an alternative to either championing or trashing community, and that is to look at the issue as a set of problems, and to think of ways these problems might be resolved. In order to do this, we must develop our critique of the economy, and not just rail against the state. As the political situation changes, our role changes too. When attacking the state was unpopular, *Telos* played an important role in doing so, helping; disabuse the left of its statist predilections. Today, however, when anti-statism has become mainstream, we have to do more. We must develop the economic arguments more than we have done in the past, and encourage new contributors to help us do this. We have to discuss how participatory democracy is blocked not only by the liberal state but also by the liberal economy. And we have to be the ones writing about the dangers of communitarianism, in the hope of finding ways to obviate these dangers. The decline of the state is a fact, not a wish. That it will lead to a great deal of pain and hardship is also a fact (already evident in the proposals of the triumphant Republicans). This hardship will trigger a backlash. If the result of the impending backlash is not just to be calls for the return of an outmoded liberalism, we need to anticipate the problems of the new federalism, not gloss them over.

Does this mean reclaiming marginality? Maybe a bit. *Telos* is not a journal of power, and should not try to be. We have always been best as a journal of critique. Lately we have been introducing a set of intriguing new ideas. Now we have to argue them.

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33. Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

34. Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

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Back to Basics

Kevin Mattson

Being twenty-seven years old, I am one of the youngest members of the *Telos* editorial board and one of the newest (I have been here for four and a half years). I am a *de facto* member of the much-talked about "twenty-something" generation. Stereotyped by the culture industry as "slackers" and derided by baby boomer New Leftists as apolitical, some members of this generation have adopted these put-downs as sources of pride. We certainly have not adopted the dogmatic rigidity of most of the late-1960s New Left. Some young writers argue that this generation should be praised for its ideological flexibility (see, for instance, the good and bad side of this argument in *Next: Young American Writers on the New Generation*). I agree, and this is one reason I decided to become involved with *Telos*. There is an ideological flexibility at *Telos* — one which evades simplistic categories like Left and Right — which appealed to me.

Though ideologically flexible, *Telos* now seems to pursue a common vision: federalism and the renewal of decentralized, participatory democracy. I am sympathetic to this political theory. But now is the time to express some reservations about where *Telos* is going. I fear that we could lose our ideological flexibility and lack of dogmatism by embracing federalism too fully.

Federalism and decentralization of political power offer important correctives to an over-encumbered, bureaucratic state and large units of economic production. But is decentralization *always* the right answer? Or, as Russell Jacoby put it in a recent discussion about traditions: do we really want to endorse *all* organic traditions? Though it might sound like a tired cliché, there was a reason certain people rejected the states' rights federalism of yesteryear. The civil rights movement in the American South exposed the sort of discrimination and unfair power dynamics which local communities can produce. This does not legitimate centralization of state authority. But it does indicate that, as with all principles, decentralization and federalism cannot be defended at every juncture. Anyone who argues that this objection leads to bureaucratic statism merely illustrates my point: posing such an either-or situation leads to ideological inflexibility. The point here is simply that federalism may not *be always* the best alternative.

When federalism is postulated as an over-arching *theory*, other problems emerge. At times it seems to imply a new philosophy of history: the end of the Cold War and its central institutions — big government and big business — has led to a

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stage in which decentralization and organic communities become guiding principles. There is perhaps a possibility for this, but nothing more. There are plenty of other potential developments. Theory and large historical assertions — the residual Hegelianism of *Telos* — threaten to ignore this. This residual Hegelianism and any idea of federalism as a all-powerful explanatory model should be dumped. For instance, economically there has been a celebration of the "flexible accumulation" traced out by Piore and Sabel — the death of Fordism and deskilled labor. There is certainly something refreshing (and more sustainable) about a new economy based on smaller, regional production. What has been ignored, however, is the underbelly of recent economic trends which grow out of "flexible accumulation." What about the continued deskilling and higher exploitation of workers with the turn towards "temp" (temporary) work? What about the increasing number of America's working poor? What about the Wal-Mart-ification of the American economy? The point is not that this more exploitative side of the American economy is the *only* tendency but rather that this tendency exists and closer attention should be paid to it.

My overall suggestion: less theory and more concrete political and social analysis. We must *stick with any concrete political analysis carried out*. We wound up endorsing the Northern League in Italy, but now things have changed and so has the League. Yet we have not kept up on this issue, most likely because recent reports do not square with the theory we tried to place the League within. We have a responsibility to continue our analysis of the League and explain where it has gone. In addition, closer attention must be paid to concrete political developments in the US.

Once again the point is ideological flexibility. I do not believe we will ever find pure examples of organic and democratically self-governing communities popping up all over the US (nor am I sure we want to). This sort of thing just will not happen. But we will find *tendencies* within recent political and social developments which point toward decentralization and democracy. We should pay closer attention to things like the management of local schools by citizens rather than school board bureaucrats, the rise of the Saturn corporation with its more flexible manufacturing system, community policing efforts and other forms of community activism. We should examine the ideas of people like Kevin Phillips, who propose concrete ways in which federal power can be decentralized. What we need more of at *Telos* are roving reporters, so to speak, who keep their eyes open and ears to the political ground. Once again, we need less theory.

So I hope that *Telos*, after 100 issues, can retain its ideological flexibility. I hope we can continue to pursue questions freely, remaining open to all sorts of different political positions. *Telos* has and can continue to offer its readers political insights without being straight-jacketed by democratic socialism, neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, paleoconservatism, or even federalism. No other journal does this.

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Adorno May Still Be Right

Jack Zipes

It has been over half a century since Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno published *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* and 17 years since Paul Piccone published "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality" in *Telos*. With the passage of time and the appearance of the 100th issue of *Telos*, it may be appropriate to review some of the major theses of the culture industry developed by Horkheimer and Adorno and amplified by Piccone's "artificial negativity" to see how they have weathered the cultural debates and the rise of postmodernism in the 1980s and 1990s, when daily life has become so totally aestheticized that the particular meanings of community and individual identity have lost all significance. Such loss allows for the shaping of ethnic and national communities purported to be deeply inbred in the people along with false religious traditions that politicians exploit to increase their power within a system they themselves cannot really control.

Adorno knew that the collapse of the division between high and low art would only lead to greater violence. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* was generated not only by Adorno's experiences with German fascism but also, and perhaps more significantly, by his encounters with American capitalism of the 1930s and 1940s. Almost all the examples Adorno uses are related to developments in the US or developments that originated in the US. There is a long passage from "On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" that cuts right to the core of his concern: "Music, with all the attributes of the ethereal and sublime which are generously accorded it, serves in America today as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music. If the advertising function is carefully dimmed in the case of serious music, it always breaks through in the case of light music. The whole jazz business, with its free distribution of scores to bands, has abandoned the idea that actual performance promotes the sale of piano scores and phonograph records. Countless hit song texts praise the hit songs themselves, repeating the titles in capital letters. What makes its appearance, like an idol, out of such masses of type is the exchange value in which the quantum of possible enjoyment has disappeared."[1]

What happens to music also occurs in all domains of art and leisure. Adorno goes on to remark that the consumer appears to be in an immediate relation with the goods, and it is this *appearance* that gives cultural goods their exchange value. As he states it, "the feelings which go to the exchange value create the appearance of immediacy at the same time as the absence of a relation to the object belies it. It

1. *The Culture Industry*, ed. J.M. Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 33-34.

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has its basis in the abstract character of exchange values. Every 'psychological' aspect, every ersatz satisfaction, depends on such social substitution."[2]

More pessimistic than Benjamin, Adorno believed that totalitarianism would spread in capitalist societies through the mass reproduction of art and the spread of exchange values. Since all forms of interaction and mediation have become based on appearance, Adorno argued that the culture industry would ultimately be the key in stamping not only the "quality" of art but the very essence of individual autonomy.[3] For Adorno, the entry fee into any Western capitalist society was the surrender of individualism, and art's role was to manipulate listeners/viewers to identify with stars, to take pleasure from such identification, and to seek power through identification with star commodities. In his analyses of film, sport, theater, radio, and television, Adorno consistently focused on the instrumental means by which the culture industry generated modes of production and behavior involving the complicity of the masses. Individuality had to be abandoned willingly for imitation of stereotypical stars emanating power that were themselves products of the culture industry. Often labeled an elitist by his critics because he denounced the masses and mass culture, Adorno actually wrote in behalf of the so-called masses, for he wanted to make everyone aware of what the masses have become and to prompt his readers *not* to succumb to the culture industry. In short, Adorno spoke out in behalf of individuality, originality, uniqueness, and particularism. Although he defended high art or what he also called responsible art, Adorno never aligned such art with a particular class nor did he celebrate the "high" or upper classes as chosen people, elected to show the truthful way to the proper goals of life through art. As far as he was concerned, anyone could belong to the masses, and practically everyone did, while thinking they were actually distinct and original. Here, of course, was the problem: the capacity of the culture industry to make masses of people believe they are unique, different, and original while compelling them to conform to market condltions and subscribing to political systems whose major role was to explore every possible way and means to endorse and spread the capitalist production of commodities.

Unfortunately, with few exceptions, Adorno's ideas have not been applied to examine and counter the manner in which socialization of children take place in the US. Aside from the entertainment industry (toys, games, books, films, advertising, video cassettes, tv) which begins to have an infl uence on infants soon after they are born, commercial firms have successfully entered all schools, private and public, not merely to sell their products but to induce children to learn about selling themselves as products and to emulate stars through the adoption of masochistic attitudes. The focus in education, as Marcuse long ago lamented, is still on achievement; yet achievement involves the surrendering of personal desires or the shaping of libidinal energy and molding oneself to be popular and successful.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

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But even if one is not or cannot be "Number One" in the US, one is motivated as a child to identify with the star or team that is. Kids play with dolls, guns, games, robots, books that allegedly give them a sense of power and confidence.

Marsha Kinder has demonstrated how theater, video films, and screenplays are made to imbue children with a false sense of power.[4] She shows how Saturday morning television shows, video games, and films help form a gendered subject who is supposed to believe that he/she can develop protean powers to assimilate the world and buy his/her way into a world more concerned with commodities than with people. Of course, the boy/girl subjects have clear delineated roles, the more adventurous and powerful for the boys and the cheerleading and decorative ones for the girls. Though it is true that children also develop their cognitive skills through television, movies, and video games, they also "imbibe" a false sense of power and aggressive instincts that furthers competition in a capitalist market system. Whatever skills are gained through television, movies, and videos is at the expense of humanitarian values. Though the narratives of the various TV shows, movies, and videos may seem to differ, they all tend to homogenize child viewers through narrative constructs that frame their lives as "precocious consumers." There are few antidotes to commercial television, movies, and TV, and Kinder's study does not argue for abolishing these media. In fact, the best way to oppose the negative impact of such media narrations is to work with them and reutilize the media to create different values and a social awareness that leads to more responsible autonomy.

But is it possible to work within the institutions of the cultural industry and change it? Perhaps, but it must be with a recognition of limitations set by the industry and the capitalist system as they assume new global forms. Here Piccone's "artificial negativity" is useful, for he demonstrated in a series of articles how Western countries did not have to resort to fascism or overt coercive features to maintain the capitalist system.[5] Indeed, capitalism had already exceeded Adorno's worst prognosis because it could co-opt protest, originality, alterity, and uniqueness to legitimate the "free market" and the "democratic" political system in forms of artificial negativity. In 1978 he wrote, "In order for the system to function, it needs control mechanisms such as the Naders and the Commoners to guarantee its viability. Far from being persecuted, the lingering opposition now needs to be supported to keep functional a bureaucracy in a state of systematic involution. Counter-bureaucratic bureaucracies become one of the paradoxical expressions of artificially generated negativity. The problem with this system-generated

4. Marsha Kinder, *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

5. Aside from "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," see "The Changing Function of Critical Theory," *New German Critique,* No.12 (Fall 1977), pp. 29-38 and "Labriola and the Roots of Eurocommunism," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology,* No. 22 (1977-78), pp. 3-44.

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negativity is that, to the extent that it is itself bureaucratically sanctioned, it tends to become an extension of the very bureaucracy in need of control. Consequently, caught in the paperwork of funding, reporting, justifying, etc., it simply extends the bureaucratic logic it was meant to challenge and becomes counter-productive."[6] Although Piccone did not analyze the culture industry in what he called the new phase of capitalism, he did claim that it is only through cultural hegemony that capitalism can sustain itself: "Given the tendency of the system to overproduce and underconsume, the thrust toward economic crisis can be averted only by successfully disposing of the surplus and exporting the ecological problems generated by intensified production. What is crucial at this point for the US is the guarantee that international trade will continue and grow. The logic of unequal exchange whereby any trade between a more advanced country and a less developed one will result in the former having the upper hand not only places the US in a favorable economic situation, but also allows for the exportation of the ecological problems resulting from the continued effort to maintain economic growth. Increasingly, less developed countries will be able to offer in trade to the US precisely those items (usually natural resources) whose continued flow raises ecological questions. Thus, the system's Achilles heel is no longer economic or social, nor political, but *cultural*."[7]

For the time being consumerism does not appear to be challenged in any serious way, while artificial forms of negativity through the projection of "new" leaders, uncorrupt presidents and ministers, clean politicians seem to flourish. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 has been a great prop for capitalism. Consumerism has spread like a tidal wave over the former Soviet Union and has inundated China as well. Along with the spread of the consumerist mentality, the "free" market of capitalism has brought with it greater violence, crime, unemployment, and allegedly greater cultural forms or freedom of expression that are plugged into the culture industry throughout Eastern Europe. At the same time, the postmodernist practices of artists and intellectuals of every stripe have "countered" the culture industry and developed subversive and emancipatory alternatives through the eclectic combination of high and low art in everyday life. Through parody, exaggeration, repulsion, and indiscrimination, post-modern culture has offered some moments of protest and resistance to the culture industry, but in the long run it is really an expression or manifestation of the desperate situation in which most people find themselves today, whether or not they have privileged access to the "system." Bernstein has pointed out how the culture industry has made use of the postmodernist "challenge" to capitalism. Indeed, postmodern art is actually merely an extension of the culture industry. It is nothing other than artificial negativity. As Bernstein states: " Because postmodernist practice alters the empirical world without transforming it, its abstract affirma-

6. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One Dimensionality," *Telos* (1978), p.48.
7. *Ibid.*, pp.51-52.

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tions belie the despair that sustains it. That despair manifests itself in aggression and violence, a violence now represented, exploited and celebrated in the media. The violence perpetuated by instrumental reason on sensuous particularity, what Adorno terms the 'non-identical,' is answered only with violence."[8]

Clearly, it is culture's function today to decorate, embellish, and alter our everyday experiences without qualitatively changing the conditions of the world around us. Politicians, artists, and intellectuals are all involved in the business of damage control. Since there is no real threat to capitalism, the conflicts in the world center around which groups will have the right and power to manage capitalism as it spreads and goes through crises. Outright violence, such as totalitarian police measures and war, will only be necessary when the culture industry breaks down, and there are no signs of this happening. Today the focus is primarily on globalization and global economies, but it may be more important to analyze how this capitalist globalization is reinforced through the culture industry that affects socialization on a global scale. The following personal anecdotes exemplify this dynamic.

Looking Artificially at Europe as Flaneur

When I was a student in Europe some 30 years ago, it was easy for Europeans to recognize me as an American because of the clothes I wore, my gait, my movements. Now, however, I am one of the crowd. Anonymous. Everyone dresses like Americans, and Americans dress like everyone. There are Adidas, Nike, Timberland labels on everyone's shoes. Sweatshirts and shirts advertise their manufacturers. Even umbrellas and coats have a logo of some kind. We are all walking advertisements just as all the tennis players and soccer stars in the world along with their stadiums are beacons of ads. But clothes and logos by themselves do not make people, there are also gestures and movements and other decorations to consider. So, I watch how young students imitate actors on popular TV shows influenced by the dubbed American sit-coms and films, and I see them gesticulate and move like Americans. The hip among them have rings in their ears, noses, and lips. Their American baseball caps are on backwards. The sweaters stick out from under their jackets. Their jeans are worn-out.

As an American in Europe, I watch as the French police in the metro and on the streets of Paris only stop people of color, question them, search them, and perhaps arrest them, just as in Berlin, London, or Minneapolis. Wherever I go in Europe, I know I can turn on a TV set and watch the same types of news broadcasts, shows, and films in a certain sequence. It does not matter what language the characters are speaking. They speak the sensational. They are all look-alikes as are their gestures and movements. I can also walk into any theater to see a serious classical play, a new moving drama, or the latest Disney hit film. The culture industry has systematically ordered the daily offerings, sequence of presentations

8. *The Culture Industry, op.cit.*, pp.21-22.

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and the contents. There is a constant socialization in the repetition of the narrative. We learn to admire and depend on those champions who will save us from terrorism and tyrants.

The Lion King *in Florence*

Actually, one does not have to turn to the mass media to learn about terrorism and tyrants or about the pervasiveness of the culture industry. One Disney film provides a way to grasping all this. Disney films and products, along with most American fast-food chains have taken hold in Europe. But it does not matter whether American products take root in Europe, or European and Asian products swamp American markets. They are all the same. Only the wrappers differ. The labels and advertisements tell us that our lives can become more glorious and different as they repeat the same scenes with new gadgets, tricks, colors, and movements.

My daughter and I went to see *Il Re Leone* at a local movie house on Christmas Eve. Surprisingly the movie house was packed with munching and gabbing children and parents. There is nothing sacred anymore on holy holidays — even in Catholic countries. Local advertisements flashed on the screen as everyone tried to get comfortable. Then came the previews mixed with more but slicker advertisements. Finally, *The Lion King* rolled across the screen. It opened with thunderous music and animals moving in a procession to admire the birth of a new prince lion named Simba. High on a cliff overlooking a vast plane, Simba is held up next to his glorious blonde-furred parents. The multi-cultural animals bow reverentially, and the sun shines brightly on this scene. As can be guessed from previous Disney films, this happy order must be challenged. Sure enough next comes the king's brother, a dark-featured lion with a black mane (what else?) who associates with ridiculously-looking laughing hyenas, who inhabit dark places with skeletons strewn about the ground. The evil brother (who is actually portrayed as Hitler in one scene) plots the murder of Simba, and eventually, with the help of the hyenas (the SS troops), manages to kill his brother and place the blame on Simba, who believes he is responsible for his father's death. Then little Simba runs off in shame and eventually finds himself in another realm, the jungle, where he meets two weird friends, a boar and a gopher, grows into a huge lion, and enjoys the comforts of a jungle paradise. Meanwhile, the evil uncle has ravaged the former kingdom, and only by chance does Simba learn that his kingdom has been devastated. His former playmate, now a beautiful lioness, wanders into the jungle in chase of the boar and finds him. Once there, she and a wise old monkey, also a karate expert and guru, convince him to return and claim his throne. Of course, Simba returns and leads a magnificent fight in thunder, rain, fire, cliffs, ravines, and caves. Everyone joins in, and of course, Simba triumphs while the hyenas eat the evil uncle (off the screen, of course). The final scene repeats the first scene with Simba and his lioness giving birth to a cub, and the wise monkey exhibiting it on a cliff to the reverent multi-cultural animals. The perfect frame as

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the celebration of the *status quo*. The eternal return as the same.

My daughter loved this film. She loves all Disney films. Though I had sworn that this would be forbidden, at age four she was given her first Barbie doll, and there was no stopping the flood after that. At age ten, she now has twenty or more Barbie dolls without genitals (just as the animals in the Disney film have no genitals), and these dolls with their perfect figures and features can do anything. They can even act out the Disney films, TV films, Space Rangers, or other popular shows that she watches. Whatever is popular as toy, film, game, dress, she knows. She learns about it in school, TV, movie theaters, or through her friends. Why did my daughter love *The Lion King*? I ask her because I have tried to introduce her to other types of fairy tales and other types or art. She could not tell me exactly why except she did find the animals cute and charming. She felt sorry when the king died. She felt glad when Simba returned and became king again. My daughter has her good reasons for liking the film. She knows how to like it because she has received commodity training in taste despite my questions and objections. On the other hand, I sit there horrified. I wonder how much of the politics of the film will seep into her brain? How much will she be encouraged to worship and admire some male king? How much will she want to become a star and stand on a cliff before multitudes of reverent people? Whether she joins the masses below or aspires to become the lioness or lion on top of the cliff, it is all repulsive to me.

One does not have to go to the cinema to be repulsed by lion king shows. Whatever I read, wherever I travel, whatever I watch, there are lion kings who promise to restore order to ravaged kingdoms or maintain order so that their subjects can continue to consume in peace without the threat of outsiders taking their jobs and lives. The media paint political conflicts by celebrating or deprecating lion kings. What we need are good strong leaders. Rarely do I read political analyses about the systems that produce the leaders. All reports and broadcasts focus on political leaders. All these kings, however, are names, representative of exchange values, and the kings can be exchanged without damage to the market forces and political systems. They are there to exhibit their talents as damage controllers, and they will be exchanged only when *certain* interest groups decide that the state and economy need more efficient control.

Controlled Sports

Control in the name of civility and civilization is what the world is about, and control of the culture industry enables lion kings to gain and keep control. Spontaneity is out, though we all long for it, desire it, miss it. Control is the name of the game. In Europe, where soccer is king, the masses must be controlled. Stadiums have become Roman coliseums with barbed wire and guards patrolling the edifices inside and outside. The contests on the fields are secondary to the event of going to the stadium and participating in the hoped-for victory. It is important to be number one, to win at all costs. Such outright display of ruthless desire goes

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against the rules of civility, thus it must be contained and controlled, just as rock concerts are carefully planned and controlled. Sports are spectacle, but a controlled spectacle, where people can briefly vent their frustration according to a prescribed rite. Now and then people are unfortunately killed, trampled on and beaten, either for revenge or because the celebration gets out of hand. Such catastrophes prompt greater control and police measures.

In America, European soccer journalists and fans were surprised that there were few police and dogs at the World Cup matches this past summer, and there was no barbed wire or moat surrounding the playing fields. Apparently sporting events are much more civilized in America. Anywhere you go in America, from the organized baseball games for peewees to the professional football games for steroid giants, they are the same and are becoming more and more the same. Even the outcome of the game is predictably the same before you enter a stadium.

Recently I went to a Minnesota Timberwolf basketball game with a friend. Although this team is the worst in the National Basketball Association, I could not get a ticket and spontaneously go to the game because the tickets were all sold out before the season began, mainly to wealthy season-subscribers or scalpers. But my friend had connections, and we went to the Target Center, an arena built with the latest high tech designs four years ago. It was the first *live* basketball game I had seen in about twenty years, and I was stunned.

As I entered the Target Center, there were stands and sellers everywhere with colored neon lights flickering on and off to attract the attention of the spectators. Enormous quantities of junk food and junk products were being sold, all advertising the Timberwolves or some other team or product. Once inside the arena, vendors kept coming through the aisles before, during, and after the game. The consumption of food was continuous. Sexy female cheerleaders, all much too old to be cheerleaders and yet cheerleaders, nevertheless, tried to drum up support for *their* team through their dance routines copied from Broadway musicals. An acrobatic mascot, a man dressed as a Timberwolf, did all sorts of leaps and capers on the floor to divert the crowd before the game began. Once the teams were all warmed up, the lights were turned off. Then music blared as each one of the starting fives was introduced with a spotlight shining on each star. Finally, the national anthem was announced, and the crowd stood and faced a huge draping American flag. "Oh Say Can You See" was sung by some celebrity as many spectators placed their hands on their hearts. Above the crowd, in the middle of the arena was a huge scoreboard and television screen framed by changing neon advertisements. Everyone, including the players, could watch the action on the screen better than they could from their seats, and many did watch the game on the screen while the game was in progress.

The game was incidental to the event, filled with all sorts of sideshows: the giggling cheerleaders constantly changing costumes to attract attention during their routines; the vendors shouting humorous refrains to draw the attention of buyers; the Timberwolf mascot jumping off a trampoline and dunking the ball to

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amaze the spectators; a contest between spectators at halftime to see if they could make half-court shots; one of the players spitting on an assistant coach; fans seeking autographs; players giving interviews.

The game was boring because it was essentially controlled by the coaches. In contrast to my "good" old days when players were allowed to play freely and spontaneously develop plays, now there are multiple set plays in basketball that are always called by the coach. The time-outs, which are determined by TV advertisements, the referees and the coaches, are part of the controlling strategy. Throughout the game, the coaches decide who to substitute and what to do in a given situation. Though the players are the star performers, it is actually the coach of the team, jumping up and down on the bench and demanding the attention of his players, referees and spectators, who is the real celebrity — the lion king, who will save the game with his calls. There are lion kings everywhere who are called to the save the game and the kingdom, to make the team number one, and bring glory to the nation.

The University

During the last twenty years I have taught at four different universities, private and public, and the situation has always been the same. The president and deans have been in constant struggles to obtain more money from the board of regents or trustees and keep costs down. The faculty are pitted against the deans and former professors, who identify with the institution. The faculty wants more self-governance, larger salaries, and money to develop programs. The students complain that they are not getting enough for their money and that there are no jobs for them when they are ready to enter the "market." In the meantime, everyone talks about the "quality" of education becoming worse, and political correctness as one of the major contributing factors to the deterioration at the university.

The answer to the problems of rising costs, poor teaching and scholarship, unemployment for graduate students, and rabid radicalism at campuses in the form of political correctness and multi-culturalism is, of course, a new president who will control things better and bring about reforms. These lion-king presidents and their deans talk about cost-efficient programs and close down branches of universities and entire programs because they are not bringing in money, and their market value is not high enough to justify sustaining them. So presidents (with the approval of the regents and state legislature) cut positions and stop hiring. They constantly ask departments to review their programs, even though the programs may be working well. They institute new rules and regulations and create so much paperwork that professors have little time to concentrate on teaching and scholarship. There are meetings to discuss further meetings. There are speeches about what must be done to reform the university. Everything must be on the mend. In the meantime, fees are raised for students who have larger classes and fewer professors.

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Most presidents and deans of colleges and universities are compelled to change the university to meet market countdowns and to create mean lean machines. Very rarely do they resist the regents and trustees. Rather, they make compromises that will enable them to stay in power and to address the outside needs of the state and culture industry within the university. There is very little space for resistance at the university because everyone is consumed by paperwork, trying to salvage something from the constant reordering that has nothing to do with education. Or perhaps it has everything to do with education. Perhaps this is the essence of education today: the time-consuming bureaucratic work and reforms that prevent the connection between critical reflection and praxis.

Artificial Negativity

As I watch myself at the university, I realize how much I contribute toward maintaining the *status quo*. Whatever critical element I have tried to introduce in my teaching, writing, and outside activities has eventually been co-opted to legitimate the tolerance and democracy of the institution. It would seem the only effective and authentic means of protest must come from outside, from the margins of the system, in order to undermine the consumer mentality and present a challenge to the capitalist free market. The long march through the institutions to change them has proved to be illusory.

Yet, outside protest is also illusory, and what is real is the culture industry that has expanded to the point of monopolizing all areas of art, sport, education, etc. Its tentacles are everywhere and are too many to ever be completely cut off. The culture industry itself was a *necessary* development closely connected to technological progress, the demands of the capitalist free market for greater profits, the rise of literacy, and the advance of mechanical reproduction, and the desires of masses of people to lead better and happier lives. Though seemingly omnipotent, there are, of course, contradictions in the culture industry that open gaps in people's lives, and not all negativity is artificially produced. There are real needs that supply force to negativity. In 1978 Piccone saw the Achilles heel of present-day capitalism as cultural, and today his major focus is on the reconstruction if not recuperation of communal life, something he claims is happening practically everywhere, which I do not see. Rather, I see the encroachment of the culture industry in all communities large and small. Such encroachment will not stop unless more efforts are directed at the early education of children, family relations and the manner in which power takes shape and is used in families and communities. In her book, *Children First*,[9] Penelope Leach has argued that children will not learn to think critically or to organize around their own interests as adults unless the community is reshaped to provide early childhood centers and more effective childcare by men and women, who come together around the welfare of

9. Penelope Leach, *Children First* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

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their children. Of course, such transformation involves changes within the family closely connected to relations at work. At present either children are *massively* neglected (since 1973 the number of American children growing up in poverty has increased by 50%) or socialized according to the needs of the culture industry. Books, toys, shows, plays, games, food, clothing, and centers are produced to give them a sense of how to consume and to be consumed by enchanting commodities. At the same time, the radical and religious Right in America complain about the moral turpitude in schools and believe that by reintroducing a classical canon, prayer, and virtue (plus police to search the students for weapons), not to mention giving more aid and money to private schools, the nation will be saved, and our young will grow into good solid citizens. It is not by chance that the Right (always more knowledgeable than the Left) spends so much time and energy on taking control of children, even the unborn, for they know indeed that the Achilles Heel of the capitalist system is located in acculturation processes. Of course, there have been numerous critics from the Left, such as Jonathan Kozol and Herbert Kohl,[10] who have stressed the importance of focusing attention on education and socialization to counter the stifling conditions within childcare centers and schools. In addition, there have been many other educators who have developed programs to subvert the culture industry through alternative schools and pedagogical programs. Until much more of this happens, we shall continue to witness mass processions celebrating the continual birth of lion kings presented as the future saviors of the realm.

10. See Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991) and Herbert Kohl, "*I Won't Learn From You and Others*": *Thoughts on Creative Maladjustment* (New York: NW Press, 1994).

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After Liberalism?

Paul Gottfried

It is natural that the appearance of *Telos*' 100th issue should evoke the same contentiousness among its editors that one finds in all the back issues. There is the predictable lively discussion whether *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* and other texts of choice for *Telos* continue to be relevant. Some also wonder whether the magazine still has — or ever had — a clear and defensible *prise de position* amid the political programs of this by now waning century. All this is, for me, profoundly ironic. For most of my life I have been an old-style European liberal and, in American politics, an unreconstructed Taft Republican. I have literally reeked of liberalism to the point of defending Max Weber's "value-free science" and Vilfredo Pareto's *metodo sperimentale*. I dreamt of "restoring" fully the free market, despite the expected opposition of large corporations and organized labor. In some particularly euphoric moments, I thought the welfare state would crumble when the Soviet Union did. Now, as I listen to William Kristoll saying "American [pseudo] liberalism" is about to collapse in the wake of the Soviet Union's disintegration, I smile in disbelief at the unsubstantiated causal connection I too had accepted as late as ten years ago.

What all this ignores and what Piccone perceives is the irreversibility of historical change. Schmitt was right that "a historical truth is true only once." As one moves away from a definable epoch, its characteristic beliefs undergo modification, sometimes to a degree that makes it impossible to recognize them in terms of what they once were. 19th century liberalism made sense in its own time and place. It was the dominant set of ideas and values of a vigorous and highly educated class toward which I still feel a profound affinity. It also left behind artifacts like market economics, Victorian social morality, and academic freedom which conceivably may still be preserved in our own very different age. Yes, I am in favor of keeping even a weakened liberal heritage around for as long as we can.

But what is a horse of a different color is what today passes for political liberalism. With all due respect to John Michael and David Gross, it is hard to see how any foreseeable populist challenge to this current liberalism will undermine political or religious liberty. For at least two generations the "new liberals," as they were once called between the two wars, have trampled on liberty as well as popular government. They have done these things more decisively than Benito Mussolini, who did more boasting than long term damage in *his* war against freedom. It is significant to what extent Gross assumes that all of liberalism is reducible to what now goes under that name. Social policies designed to enhance the

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self-esteem and earnings of designated victim minorities and the redistribution of income are seen as quintessentially liberal. But neither would have been acceptable for any 19th century liberal, and may have aroused even some reservations in John Stuart Mill, who had deep misgivings about (as well as intermittent sympathy for) social democracy. What were "self-evident beliefs and rights" for liberals one hundred years ago have little to do with contemporary liberalism. The sacredness of property and contract, and the right to engage (by current standards) in racist and sexist academic scholarship, were the kinds of things that the old liberals held as "self-evident." Race Relations Acts and other attempts to criminalize "insensitive" learning and speech, and the imposition of quotas on universities and the workplace are the contemporary liberal's approach to upholding "self-evident" freedoms. Obviously, neither makes us freer or even more equal, and the major beneficiaries of that affirmative action so beloved by liberals have not been underclass blacks but, as the *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* report, middle- and upperclass white women.

What was once the "philosophy of freedom" has become a warrant for arbitrary power being exercised by public administrators and judicial social engineers. In the Anglo-American world, J. S. Mill, L. T. Hobhouse, John Dewey, Herbert Croly, and Horace Kallen all contributed to the transformation of liberalism which led to its present formulation and meaning — as bureaucratically managed democracy based on ever more exacting standards of equality and a secularist scientific public philosophy.

Obviously, such ideas did not triumph in a vacuum. The advent of an urban, industrialized society full of increasingly deracinated individuals eager to benefit from mass production created the social precondition for the "new liberalism." Once that condition was established, the new elite entrenched itself as scientific managers dealing with a captive public. In return for obedience, it offered socialization (as a form of social peace) and centralized supervision and redistribution of the GNP. More recently, the liberal ruling class has come to provide multiculturalism as a form of reconstruction for traditional societies and as a means of controlling the culturally heterogeneous immigrants (many illegal). This multiculturalism, which has become a favorite theme of the culture industry, also represents a desperate attempt to force unity upon a society which liberal administrations can no longer keep in order. Liberal immigration policies indicate what is the increasingly vulnerable Achilles heel afflicting our managerial regime. Built upon an extensive alliance, going from multinational corporations to official victim groups and social workers, this "liberal" regime embraces everyone but the majority of tax-paying citizens. Without their support or at least acquiescence, "liberal democracy" and the political elite which appeals to it are both in deep trouble.

The populist alternative is not a glorification of medieval village life. It is rather a recognition of the undemocratic nature of "liberal democracy" and, as a nostalgic old liberal, it seems to me that this new populism may be more liberal as

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well as more democratic than what it seeks to overthrow. It is causing alarm within liberal ranks, as should be the case. The anxieties expressed by David Gross also come up in a fat tome devoted to some of the same concerns by Michael Kazin, an editor of *Tikkun*, who complains that "left populism" is now in disrepute. Populism is now "a language of the dispirited, the vengeful and the cynical." It is "of little use in regulating corporations that operate in a score of nations, in helping impoverished people to develop their economies without jeopardizing the health of the planet, in convincing Americans that their self-interest requires having compassion for the poor and transplanted at home and abroad." Ost displays the same socialist reservations in his comments about the current populism: that its "anti-state arguments have always had a subtext of anti-poor arguments, since every state *always* seeks to appear as a defender of the poor." Supposedly only "class-based antagonisms" can settle human problems, by "adjusting the economic system rather than by expelling Moslems from Bosnia."

There are numerous problems attached to these anti-populist arguments. First of all, it is simply untrue that "class-based antagonisms" are less virulent than ethnic or religious ones. In the 20th century far more human beings have been imprisoned and killed because of Ost's antiseptic hatreds than because of all other kinds of hostility put together. What were the brutalized victims of communism other than targeted class enemies? As for the contention that those who oppose present political structures are really opposed to the poor because the state "appears" to protect the have-nots, it is loaded with bogus assumptions. Ost's argument is equivalent to saying that opponents of Hitler were really out to destroy Western and Christian civilization because Hitler claimed to be defending that entity when he launched his invasion of Russia. Nor does it seem to have dawned on Ost or Kazin that the liberal state represents the largest concentration of economic and political power in history. Unlike the corporations it shakes down or works to "sensitize," the liberal managerial state takes over possessions and earnings *by force*.[1] What it redistributes and regulates it gives mostly to itself in transferred revenues and control over both commerce and individual citizens.

It is also hard to believe that this state now functions to hold down corporate wealth and greedy businessmen who will rush to take over once the political policemen have gone. The holders of public and private wealth have become allied — something the populists noticed ninety years ago — and while big business and its national spokesmen on the *Wall Street Journal* favor some forms of deregulation, it is not as the prelude to a populist revolution. The only aspects of the welfare state which big business and its admirers are protesting are aid to dependent children, marginal tax rates, and compulsory as opposed to voluntary affirmative action. On liberal immigration, human rights education at home and abroad. criminalization of discrimination, "moderate" feminism, and

1. See Murray N. Rothbard, *Man, Economy and the State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

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social services for illegal aliens, Gross, Ost, Michael and Kazin will likely find soulmates among the multinationals.

Gross and Michael believe that momentous changes are already taking place as part of a populist counterrevolution. We may return in one great leap to the medieval *Respublica Christiana* or to the real or imaginary Gilded Age. Again, no dramatic changes seem to be in the works — at least not for the time being— and those that will come are not likely to bring back an earlier age. At least in the US, the populists are simply disgruntled serfs who wish to become citizens but have no real memory of exercising citizenship or of being free of either public administrators or therapeutic socializers. In England, Germany, and Scandinavia the situation may be even bleaker. There a majority of citizens receive more than half of their incomes or pensions as public employees or public beneficiaries.

There is no way that a populist movement can prevail in the US, unless there is a wholesale replacement of the leadership of the Republican Party. The Kemps, Gingriches, Doles and Kristolls are primarily interested in giving and enjoying Republican Party patronage. This means maintaining at any price the Washington establishment and not allowing power to devolve on the citizens of Jackson, Miss. or Pierre, South Dakota. On election night it was worthy of note that the media's favorite "conservative Republican strategist" Kristoll urged the need for Republican restraint after claiming that we had just seen "the Bolshevik Revolution in reverse." The cataclysm to which Kristoll was referring was an opportunity to consolidate party resources in order to "take back the presidency in 96." For Speaker of the House Gingrich, in his first address before the new Congress, the electoral victory enjoyed by his party would allow the country to renew the "legacy of FDR." Gross, Michael and Kazin should relax! Black clericalism and the fascist jack boot are still not in sight, and the politicians are still out there negotiating with the mediacrats about how racial and gender quotas can be modified, lest they make white males too jittery. In the meantime, the call for accountable government will grow louder. It is, after all, the kind of activity which called *Telos* into existence. The towering contribution made by this journal has been its willingness to expose "liberal democracy" as flagrantly undemocratic. To this, I would only add that its liberal record has been even worse.

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From the New Left to the New Populism

Paul Piccone

If a journal manages to survive for 100 issues, it is reasonable to assume that the editorial board has managed to reach some sort of internal consensus and can finally rest on its laurels. Such is not the case with *Telos*. Far from constituting a self-congratulatory occasion, the editors' critical reflections on the history of the journal amount, at best, to a collective roast or, at worst, a theoretical free-for-all. The closest they come to a consensus is about a general sense that there has been a conservative involution, that the analyses being published are becoming increasingly indistinguishable from those articulated elsewhere, and that there is a tendency to follow popular political fads. Whatever this may mean, it certainly does not betray internal complacency. After all these years, nothing seems to be settled and the editorial board remains a hopelessly heterogeneous group still trying to come to some agreement concerning many crucial and not-so-crucial issues, such as precisely what constitutes this conservative involution, *who* has fallen victim to it, what the journal originally sought to accomplish, what it in fact has accomplished, and what it should be doing now and in the future. While predicaments of this kind usually denote widespread confusion, they can also be the source of creativity. This is why this theoretical *bellum omnium contra omnes* may be interpreted as evidence of lingering internal vitality, an unwillingness to take anything for granted, and a suspicion of all positions even faintly resembling conformism and passivity.

The point of departure in confronting such a predicament must be a critical re-evaluation of what *Telos* has been for more than a quarter century, where it fits within both the short parabolic trajectory of the New Left and, more generally, within contemporary intellectual history. Robert D'Amico, one of the more senior editors, whose association with the journal dates back to its very founding in the late 1960s in Buffalo, has provided a provocative reconstruction of what he sees as the functional equivalent of the decline and fall of the *Telos* project. According to D'Amico, *Telos* began as a foreign philosophical import, never quite managed to break into the predominant intellectual market, tried to Americanize without really changing its deep-seated Marxist perspective, and ended up where it began: ineffectively bickering at the margins of politics and academia. Worse yet, D'Amico sees this whole effort as the American tail-end of that broader continental project of attempting to "Westernize" Marxism during the Cold War by de-emphasizing the crude economism of Soviet Diamat and reformulating it within a more sophisticated phenomenological framework without, however, seriously

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criticizing its fundamental flaws. Such an account is not altogether accurate. It is based on an oversimplification of both the history of *Telos* and of 20th century intellectual trends — first and foremost, the history of Marxism.

Western Marxism and the New Left

To begin with a relatively irrelevant point in D'Amico's reconstruction, Alexandre Kojève was an anti-communist Russian emigrée whose Heideggerianism was definitely *not* a theoretical source of Western Marxism.[1] Because of his work on Hegel, most French intellectuals interested in Marxism after WWII studied his and Jean Hyppolite's work to become better acquainted with the philosophical framework within which Marx originally developed his analyses of capitalist society.[2] Neither Hyppolite nor Kojève, however, were in any sense Marxists or even sympathetic to communist politics. This minor detail is symptomatic of a broader misreading of the history of Marxism and of a more serious inflation of the impact of phenomenology on post-WWII European philosophy. Both Western Marxism and phenomenology were much more limited cultural phenomena than D'Amico suggests, and the two were never connected in any way other than in the works of some particular thinkers. In fact, the three leading Hegelian Marxists who laid the foundation of Western Marxism (Lukács, Korsch and Gramsci) were generally unfamilar with phenomenology and those who did come in contact with it (Lukács) never had much use for it.[3]

As far as phenomenology's broader impact on Western philosophy is concerned, although Heidegger's influence has been growing steadily since the 1940s, Husserl's fortunes have not fared nearly as well, while works of other phenomenologists such as Scheler, Geiger, et. al. have been all but forgotten. Furthermore, the fashionable Heidegger of postmodernism and deconstruction is not Heidegger the phenomenologist. He is, rather, Heidegger the existentialist (in the 1940s and 1950s), and Heidegger the critic of Western metaphysics (in the 1970s

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1. Contrary to Marx's claim that real history would begin *after* the proletarian revolution, Kojève believed it had already ended with the French Revolution or, at the latest, according to his student Francis Fukuyama's more recent calculations, in 1989, with the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the surest ways to stop being a Marxist in the 1940s would have been to take Kojève seriously. See Alexandre Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, tr. by James H. Nichols, Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

2. See Jean Hyppolite, *Genesis and Structure of Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit, tr. by Samuel Cherniak and John Heckman (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1974).

3. Lukács did not confront phenomenology until long after History and Class-Consciousness had already helped lay the foundations for what eventually came to be known as Western Marxism. Thus, in what is probably his most Zhdanovian work, *Existentialisme ou Marxisme?* tr. by E. Kelemen (Paris, Nagel, 1948), he ridiculed phenomenology as a useless contemplative method which, when all is said and done, leaves everything as is. Shortly afterwards, in *The Destruction of Reason*, tr. by Peter Palmer (London: Merlin Press, 1980), he went so far as to list phenomenology among the movements which intellectually paved the way for fascism.

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and 1980s). In other words, phenomenology never even came close to achieving the kind of philosophical hegemony D'Amico thinks it did. Historians such as H. Stuart Hughes[4] did not even rate it as a specific philosophical "school" in their surveys of recent intellectual trends. Even Herbert Spiegelberg, who spent most of his life studying it, generally considered it only "a movement"[5] — not to mention D'Amico's own teacher, Marvin Farber, who downgraded it even further to a mere "tendency" in the first major work to introduce phenomenology in the US in the late 1930s.[6] It was influential mainly within relatively esoteric French *existentialist* circles with people such as Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Tran-Duc Thao,[7] which further explains why what became popular in France as phenomenology was primarily Heidegger's rather than Husserl's more orthodox brand. On the whole, in the two decades immediately following WWII, German philosophy was still concerned mostly with neo-Kantian themes, French philosophy remained generally Cartesian, Italian philosophy was under Croce's and Gentile's influence, while in Spain and Portugal Thomism was still predominant.

Similarly, it is not entirely accurate to claim that Marx' works began to be read widely only after WWII. Marxism as such had already collapsed in Europe with the so-called Bernstein or "revisionist" debate at the turn of the century, when it was realized that social democracy and Bismark's policies had successfully integrated the labor movement within the logic of corporate capitalism. By 1914 Marxism had become so marginal and conformist that it had very little impact in moderating even organized workers' enthusiastic support for the conflict in the various belligerent countries. Some of its more politically perceptive students, such as Sorel, Mussolini and Sombart, had already moved to the Right, and had it not been for the Russian Revolution — a voluntaristic *coup d'état* contradicting the determinist and unilinear character of orthodox Marxism (which was correctly

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4. H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society: The Reorientation of European Social Thought 1890-1930* (New York, Random House, 1961)

5. Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), two volumes.

6. Marvin Farber, *The Foundation of Phenomenology: Edmund Husserl and the Quest for a Rigorous Science of Philosophy* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1967), third revised edition. The first edition dates back to 1936.

7. Tran Duc Thao, *Phenomenology and Dialectical Materialism*, tr. by Daniel J. Herman and Donald V. Morano (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1986). For an introduction to Tran Duc Thao's work, see Silvia Federici, "Viet-Cong Philosophy: Tran Duc Thao," in *Telos* 6 (Fall 1970), pp. 104-117. Unlike Merleau-Ponty, who broke altogether with Marxism in the early 1950s, or Sartre, who remained throughout his life the opportunistic fellow-traveller *par excellance* paying lip service to the unrealized possibilities of the Soviet "experiment," while philosophically demonstrating the impossibility of its eschatology, Tran Duc Thao, who went back to Vietnam after studying in France, eventually became a Diamat ideologist whose interest in phenomenology eventually faded into standard Marxist dogma — probably in order to survive in Hanoi, at a time when the Ho Chi Min regime was closely allied with the Soviet Union.

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branded "a revolution against *Capital*" by one of the most sophisticated Marxists of the time[8]) — Marxism would have gone the way of other 19th century philosophies of progress, like those of Comte, Spencer and the various Social Darwinists.

What was new in the post-WWII period was the popularization of texts such as the *1844 Manuscripts* (originally published in 1932) and the *Grundrisse* (first made available in 1952).[9] The political objective at the time was to justify the various Hegelian interpretations of Marxism developed in the 1920s and 1930s in the explicit effort to provide the communist movement with an ideological perspective more sophisticated than, and transcending, the nationalist and bureaucratic-collectivist one deployed by Moscow through the Third International to legitimate Soviet imperialism. Important as this material was, all major Hegelian reinterpretations of Marxism were carried out well before these works became known, solely on the basis of careful readings of standard texts such as *Capital*, which had been readily available since the latter part of the 19th century.

The point of this minor rectification of the record is to clarify the extent to which, while both Western Marxism and the original *Telos* project focussed on the same general philosophical traditions, it is wrong to associate the two in a relation of direct derivation. *Telos* was interested in Western Marxism primarily as a suppressed tradition in need to be properly studied and evaluated. But already in 1976 it was clear that "what had originally attracted us to Marxism . . . has turned out to be only in the most superficial sense embodied in any of the various 'Marxisms' that we have painfully rediscovered in the last 10 years."[10] Thus. from the very beginning the *Telos* project and Western Marxism were altogether different phenomena, which occurred in different cultural contexts, at different times, and for radically different reasons. The first was an attempt to relegitimate Marxism after the increasingly-difficult-to-deny-or-explain-away revelations about the growing political involution of the Soviet regime (the Moscow trials, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the Gulags, etc.) made it difficult for European intellectuals to remain associated with the communist movement. The second was a distinctly New Left phenomenon: an internal attempt to unify an amorphous social movement by means of a theoretical perspective as sophisticated as any available in Europe at the time, providing both a political vision and a better self-understanding.[11] The communist movement never had any impact within the early SDS or the journal, and the Cold War was always regarded as a geopolitical

8. Antonio Gramsci, "La Rivoluzione contro il *Capitale*," in *Avanti* (November 24, 1918). English translation in Paul Piccone and Pedro Cavalcanti eds., *History, Philosophy and Culture in the Young Gramsci* (St.Louis: Telos Press, 1975).

9. For an account of these developments, see Paul Piccone, "Reading the *Grundrisse*: Beyond 'Orthodox' Marxism," in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Summer, 1975), pp. 235-255.

10. See "Internal Polemics," in *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977), p. 180.

11. See Paul Piccone, "Students' Protest, Class-Structure and Ideology," in *Telos* 3, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Spring 1969), pp. 106-122.

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fraud meant to legitimate two increasingly irrational social systems.[12]

Despite their philosophical sophistication and cultural breadth, Western Marxism and the original formulations of Critical Theory were part of that long series of failed efforts in the 20th century to relegitimate socialism and mass democracy as radical emancipatory alternatives to capitalism and liberalism, well after the Bernstein debate had indicated the extent to which the former could easily degenerate to a mere extension of the latter. The tragedy of the Russian Revolution and the bureaucratic centralism it institutionalized brought about an acceleration of the destructive pace of that same dialectic of enlightenment which in the West did not reach similar catastrophic results because of the persistence of stubborn traditional obstacles. The various theoreticians of Western Marxism often expressed dark forebodings about such a possibility and remained deeply ambivalent toward the very socialism they otherwise advocated. This is why all of them sought to buttress their analyses by recourse to extraneous philosophical traditions, such as existentialism. The results were not always successful relegitimations of the original eschatological vision of a working class institutionalizing the Western equivalent of Nirvana once and for all. For the Sartre of *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Marxism was redefined opportunistically as an inevitable historical horizon characterized by periodic serial involutions remediable only through exceptional events conducive to the occasional fusion of groups, themselves doomed to an inevitable degeneration into seriality.[13] In other words, even revolutionary salvation seemed to have a rather short shelf life. For Merleau-Ponty, it was initially (in 1947, at the time of the publication of *Humanism and Terror*) a philosophy of history justified in exacting whatever human toll was required for its fulfillment (the extermination of the Kulaks, the Moscow trials, etc.). Subsequently, after the publication of *Adventures of the Dialectic,* having realized the folly of his position, Merleau-Ponty began to lay the foundation of structuralist and post-structuralist thought by inquiring into the contingency and artificiality of Western thought, thus helping pave the way for the nihilism of postmodernism and deconstruction.[14]

Other predominant versions of critical Marxism did not fare much better. By the 1950s Gramsci[15] was being sanctified by Togliatti as the official ideologist of

12. See Paul Piccone, "Dialectical Logic Today," in *Telos* 2, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Fall 1968), pp. 38-83.

13. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, Vol. 1, "Theory of Practical Ensembles," tr. by Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: New Left Books, 1976). See also "The Risk of Spontaneity and the Logic of the Institution: An Interview with Jean-Paul Sartre," in *Telos* 4 (Fall 1969), pp. 191-206

14. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, tr. by Joseph Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

15. See Palmiro Togliatti, *Gramsci* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1956). For a critique of Togliatti's instrumentalization of Gramsci, see Paul Piccone "Gramsci's Marxism: Beyond Lenin and Togliatti," in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Winter 1976), pp. 485-512.

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Italian Stalinism, while most of the original members of the Frankfurt School had abandoned any hope in the "really existing" communist movement and retreated into psychoanalysis and aesthetics as the only remaining domain able to prefigure emancipatory possibilities. Whatever Frankfurt "socialism" there had ever been had receded either to the instincts and then to the genes (in Marcuse's later formulations[16]) or, in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory*, into philosophy and abstract art which, breaking with the all-inclusive pervasiveness of the concept, were still supposedly able to vindicate an alternative emancipatory vision of the whole.[17] Even if there may have been some truth in such a speculative scenario, all such critiques of predominant social pathologies inevitably shipwrecked on the Cold War realities of a bipolar world where neither side seemed susceptible to substantial internal modifications. Thus, notwithstanding all aberrations, efforts to salvage traditional Marxist eschatology inevitably ended up vindicating the Soviet Union's "progressive" historical role, while any reservations about communist excesses were cast by an intolerant Left as apologies for American "democracy" and whatever imperialist projects may have come along with it.[18]

The internal rigidity of both systems translated into the dogmatism of Stalinism and, to a lesser extent, McCarthyism. This may account for the sharp decline of internal criticism within both camps and their respective bureaucratic involution resulting in, e.g., the systemic irrationalities of the Soviet economy and major US foreign policy blunders such as the Vietnam War. It may also help explain the unsophisticated ideological predicament of the late 1960s. This dearth of internal criticism in the US resulted in the recycling of the most unlikely alternative perspectives by a new generation desperately attempting to understand itself in the midst of what was increasingly perceived as generalized irrationality. This is why, paradoxically, the Frankfurt School's apocalyptic view of American society, at that time articulated in English only by Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man*,[19] could become the theoretical perspective of much of a New Left movement concerned primarily with forcing the system to abide by its own principles, despite the fact that the main thrust of Critical Theory at the time was to demonstrate how all oppositional efforts not only fed smoothly into the predominant logic of domination but ultimately tended to reinforce it.

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16. Herbert Marcuse, *Essay on Liberation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

17. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, tr. by Christian Lenhardt (London: Rutledge, 1984).

18. For all practical purposes, *Telos* finally settled came to terms with Marxism in 1977 when it was realized that: "We must stop blaming Kautsky, Engels and Lenin, or Stalin for 'Marxism' in the effort to pump formaldehyde into a theoretical cadaver which, after all died of a legitimate disease. Looking back over the last eight years, it can be said that our historical function has been primarily to provide Marxism with a decent burial." See "Internal Polemics," *op. cit.*, p. 181.

19. Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964).

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While obviously in sympathy with Marcuse's indictment of the irrationality of a system on the brink of nuclear and ecological self-destruction, from the very beginning *Telos*' relation to the Frankfurt School was rather qualified. The popularization of Marcuse's long-forgotten early works of the 1920s and 1930s undertaken by the journal very early on was usually followed by critical commentaries taking exception to Heideggerian residues and other serious flaws (such as the recourse to psychoanalysis to spin theoretical epicycles explaining the failure of revolutionary movements and the rise of fascism).[20] Such efforts, while relatively interesting in the 1930s, were much harder to digest in the 1960s. This is why they were described as a "tragedy" when originally formulated, and a "farce" when later recycled in the 1960s.[21] Worse yet, the negative dialectic and aesthetic theory worked out by Adorno to explain 20th century cataclysmic involutions while desperately seeking to vindicate vanishing emancipatory options were considered, at best, intriguing philosophical exercises with ridiculous political implications. Who in the late 1960s-early 1970s could possibly see artists or philosophers as the only remaining hope for the future? Most of the people in the first category were simply after a fast buck, while those in the second had for years been desperately trying to technocratize and scientize philosophy as another specialized academic discipline with its own particular object and techniques, in order to share as full members in the spoils of an increasingly corrupt academic industry. The claim that subjectivity had become the privileged mode of consciousness of a few effete intellectuals and artists was never seen as more than a cultural conceit typical of the Teutonic mandarin system out of which Critical Theory originally developed. This is why *Telos* dealt with Critical Theory roughly in the fashion Adorno had dealt with American civilization and modern culture in *Minima Moralia*:[22] as a pile of cultural ruins useful, at best, for some future theoretical reconstruction, the way Roman ruins had for years provided the building material for housing throughout the Middle Ages.

In this sense, D'Amico misses the point when he describes the original *Telos* project as an attempt to import and extend in the US a Western Marxism which had been rapidly declining in Europe since the 1956 Khruschev revelations and became terminally bankrupt after the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. *Telos* never defined itself against Stalinism or communism, which always seemed distant and irrelevant to American realities. It never sought to vindicate the viability of the Russian Revolution as an eschatological catharsis in world history. While never

20. Mitchell Franklin, "The Irony of the Beautiful Soul of Herbert Marcuse," in *Telos* 6 (Fall 1970), pp. 3-35; and Paul Piccone and Alex Delfini, "Herbert Marcuse's Heideggerian Marxism," in *Telos* 6 (Fall 1970), pp. 36-46.

21. Paul Piccone "From Tragedy to Farce: The Return of Critical Theory," in *New German Critique* 7 (Winter 1976), pp. 91-104.

22. Theodore W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, tr. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: New Left Books, 1974).

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part of the predominant anti-communist hysteria (which explains why even official communists ideologues such as Herbert Aptheker were never automatically excluded from its pages but evaluated and published solely on the basis of the intrinsic merits of the arguments[23]), there was never any hint of the possibility of reforming Soviet communism. The objective was always to vindicate the ineradicability of subjectivity, the teleology of the Western project and the possibility of regrounding such a project by means of a phenomenological and dialectical reconstitution of Marxism in conjunction with the New Left.[24] The phenomenological project of an epistemological foundation for an otherwise arbitrary dialectic (understood as the *Weltanschauung* of a movement presenting itself as a radical alternative to the given) did not collapse. It only became superfluous with the disintegration of the political structure it was ultimately meant to support.

Search for Subjectivity

The 1960s were not only the decade of the Vietnam War but also of an unprecedented expansion of the "Great Society" — a decade when new social possibilities were only matched in magnitude by the seeming myopia of the political leadership. The standard explanation of lingering social pathologies in terms of Cold War imperatives sounded increasingly hollow. Among other things, it meant that young men were expected to fight and die in a meaningless war thousands of miles away, in defense of questionable and never satisfactorily explained "national interests" to contain an alleged international communist movement which was already well on its way to internal disintegration with the Sino-Soviet split, the Yugoslav break, etc. Unlike the post-WWII generation, which had experienced first hand the evils of Nazism and defined itself in terms of that opposition, in the 1960s there no longer seemed to be any credible enemy able to mobilize society, at least to the point of willingly accepting the allegedly temporary necessity of social pathologies. Communism was generally seen, first by SDS and then by most of the New Left, as the "paper tiger" it was and taken less and less seriously as a collective threat. As James Miller has pointed out, thanks largely to the promises of "the Great Society," in the 1960s the gap between the system's self-image and its social realities became increasingly problematic.[25]

Along with a number of other groups, *Telos* was born within such a confused political context. As part of the New Left, which saw itself the victim of a capitalist repression no longer warranted even by the objective requirements of the

23. Cf. Herbert Aptheker, "Imperialism and Irrationalism," in *Telos* 4 (Fall 1969), pp. 168-175.

24. See "Introduction" to Bart Grahl and Paul Piccone, eds., *Towards a New Marxism: Proceedings of the First International Telos Conference (Waterloo, Ontario October 8-11, 1979)* (St.Louis: Telos Press, 1973).

25. James Miller, *"Democracy in the Streets." From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987).

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system, *Telos* also explained the Cold War as the reciprocal legitimation for two fundamentally irrational systems. Unlike most of the New Left, however, *Telos* did not merely seek to remedy existing discrepancies by simply demanding that the system conform to its own principles (the civil rights, the anti-war or the ecological movements), but sought a broader explanation for the system's alienation from its own foundations. The standard Marxist account in terms of capitalist economics undermining democratic politics seemed obsolete. There was no longer any substantial political opposition and thus no objective reason warranting what appeared to be "surplus repression." Consequently, while most of the non-psychedelic sectors of the New Left began their long march to extinction by either buying into a crude mechanical Marxism nostalgically recycling a mythical proletarian insurgency no longer taken seriously even by the most committed communist *apparatchiks* or by slowly degenerating into the shock-troops of a liberal bureaucracy fostering homogenization (not, as the Frankfurt School and C. Wright Mills had correctly seen it, as the creation of a manipulable mass society of "cheerful robots," but as the much more easily marketable "social equality"[26]), *Telos* focused instead on trying to understand what appeared to be a new logic of domination. The problem was to develop the conceptual tools to understand the *real dynamics* beneath appearances which could no longer be explained in terms of the logic of capital. This was also the time when Alvin W. Gouldner, whose office was literally next to *Telos*' in St.Louis, was beginning to develop a theory of the New Class.[27]

Thus the original project was to provide a decaying Marxism (understood as the self-consciousness of capitalism) with the kind of subjective foundation it seemed to desperately need in order to break out of the labyrinth of one-dimensionality and reconstruct the new logic of political and cultural domination. Dialectical logic in general and the theory of reification in particular seemed to provide viable alternative approaches to the irreversibly fragmented and conformist social sciences. Contrary to predominant concepts of bourgeois individuality positing a subjectivity contraposed to a self-given objective reality susceptible to a kind of external intervention which left the acting subject uneffected, the dialectical approach construed the subject as inextricably bound with the object and constantly redefining itself in the process of apprehending and manipulating it. In other words, the culmination of the dialectic of subject and object postulated the viability of a social system as a function of its internalization by the members living within it as active citizens. Unlike "bourgeois" concepts of abstract individuality, i.e., a mythical, self-given atomic entity operating within a corresponding mechanical universe consisting of an aggregation of sim-

26. C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (New York, Oxford: 1951).

27. Alvin W. Gouldner, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979).

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ilar atomic entities, its "dialectical" counterpart presupposes an organic view of individuality, i.e., subjectivity constituted by the social and historical relations within which it is embedded.[28] The relevance of this distinction is in the implication it has for subjectivity. As the French-Hungarian psychiatrist Joseph Gabel showed in his important but under-appreciated work on *False Consciousness*, the internalization of the social system is so essential for healthy subjectivity that psychological dysfunctions can be traced back to an inadequate or distorted internalization.[29] Consequently, the fact that both American "democracy" and Soviet communism had become illegitimate caricatures of their former selves and were no longer being effectively internalized was seen as having decisive consequences for the quality of citizenship within both societies. Similarly, unless such a gap between objective social reality and subjective experience was successfully bridged, both systems would remain extraneous to their citizens' real values and thus doomed to become increasingly crisis-ridden, with a clientized citizenry unable to sustain modern political institutions. While implicit in this formulation, the explicit postulation of a New Class dominating this pathological social reality as a result of its now necessary mediational role was still years away, and so was the postulation of participatory democracy and federalism as the preconditions for a healthy postmodern populism.

Phenomenological Marxism was formulated as an attempt to re-ground Marxism (understood as a totalizing theory of society transcending the fragmentation of most academic social sciences) in individual experience, thus providing a general vision able to relegitimate the teleology built into the very foundation of the Western world-view: the constitution of a social individual encapsulating in its very being that totality of which it is an inextricable part and which constitutes the source of all meaning.[30] Phenomenology, as articulated in Husserl's later works (such as *The Crisis of the European Sciences*[31]), seemed to be particularly adequate to the task since it dealt precisely with that subjective dimension of experience which in the Marxist and Hegelian dialectic had remained unclear and misunderstood. The emphasis on the primacy of the subjective dimension and the need to constantly reconstitute the given was from the very beginning the basis of a critical perspective which prevented *Telos* from buying into any pregiven

28. See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, tr. by Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960); and Enzo Paci, Ch. 15, "Unity of Man and Philosophical Self-Understanding," in his *The Function of the Sciences and the Meaning of Man*, tr. by Paul Piccone and James E. Hansen (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), pp. 275-288.

29. Joseph Gabel, *False Consciousness*, tr. by M. Thompson [with the assistance of K. Thompson] (London: Blackwells, 1975).

30. Paul Piccone, "Phenomenological Marxism," in *Telos* 9 (Fall 1971), pp. 3-31.

31. Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*, tr. by David Carr (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

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framework — even the one within which it originally came into being. Among other things, this also made it anathema to that very New Left it sought to strengthen through unrelenting criticism.[32]

D'Amico claims the project collapsed due to internal problems. It would have been more correct to spell out these internal problems in terms of *Telos*' troubled identity as the philosophical self-consciousness of the New Left. What really collapsed was a New Left unable to articulate a radical new vision and thus doomed to become reintegrated within the system as a relatively irrelevant internal control mechanism. Worse yet, having failed to transcend the predominant abstract Enlightenment rationalism, its austere moralism began to translate into what a couple of decades later came to full bloom as the aberrations of "political correctness," whereby the rich heterogeneity of life is coerced to conform with the constitutive misery of the concept. This is why the phenomenological project was gradually deemphasized in favor of attempts to come to terms with the history of varieties of Marxisms that had remained unknown in the English-speaking world and to provide a forum for what at the time seemed parallel efforts by East European dissident intellectuals to revitalize various traditions of Marxism within their particular countries. The assumption was that maybe some of these obscure and forgotten efforts already had prefigured some other solutions for the problems of movements unable to translate external criticism into more concrete projects of social reconstruction. This is why, in the early and mid-1970s, *Telos* accepted many contributions from East European dissidents. Similarly, it published many studies of the work of various unorthodox Marxist thinkers excommunicated by the Third International and therefore doomed to political irrelevance and obscurity in a bipolar world where the "Left" pole was still under the iron fist of Soviet communism. The problem was no longer primarily to come up with the "right" theory or phenomenological foundation, but of relocating the *Telos* project within a broader historical framework and redimensioning the role of critical consciousness in post-1968 American society. With the New Left self-destructing into Marxism-Leninism, evaporating in the drug culture or rejoining the left wing of the liberal establishment, there no longer seemed any need to reground a project that had already collapsed. Sooner or later "political orphans"[33] must stop looking for deceased parents.

Redefining the Logic of Domination

This historical reconstruction of how phenomenological Marxism was rendered obsolete by conditions beyond its control helps understand why, in the mid-1970s, the focus shifted from subjective deficits to the dynamics of a crisis-ridden system which, surprisingly, thrived on subsequently instrumentalizing these very

32. Paul Piccone, "From Youth Culture to Political Praxis," in *Radical America*, Vol. 3, No. 6 (November 1969), pp. 15-21.

33. Paul Piccone, "20 Years of *Telos*," in *Telos* 75 (Spring 1988), p. 13.

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crises while at the same time progressively eroding the conditions for its own reproduction. The analyses of artificial negativity sought to radicalize the pessimistic eschatology of *One-Dimensional Man* and *Negative Dialectics* by examining not only how the system integrated all opposition to fuel its own further development, but by emphasizing how systemic dysfunctions such as the Viet-Nam War, racial segregation, family disintegration, etc. were the result of the system's own success in devastating all opposition — an outcome that had unintendedly resulted in negativity deficits and thus a loss of internal control mechanisms.[34]

The end of whatever "class struggle" between labor and capital there may have been (with the integration of labor by the New Deal in the US and its disempowerment by fascism and Stalinism elsewhere) also meant the elimination of that critical conflictuality which had kept the system relatively rational by indirectly regulating wages and prices. Without the negativity provided by this conflictuality, the system simply followed the involutions of the dialectic of enlightenment toward self-destruction. While in the Soviet Union thorough state control of economic life meant the destruction of any economic rationality and the eventual bankruptcy of what turned out to be a terminally irrational and wasteful system, in the US the state had to remain more modest in scope and limited to merely managing conflicts and steering the economy by means of indirect administrative mechanisms. By the 1960s, however, it became clear that even this soft version of bureaucratic centralism tended to buffer internal conflicts too much, to the point of reducing them to formal instances routinely dealt with by "crisis-management" experts with recourse to formal procedures, thus becoming integral parts rather than independent variables able to guarantee minimal system rationality. Around that time the state began to support what from the system's viewpoint were rationalizing "emancipatory" social movements, i.e., potential rationalizing agencies. Both the civil rights and the women movements were initially triggered by court decisions (Brown vs. Kansas Board of Education and Roe vs. Wade) which preceded rather than followed the social conflicts subsequently deployed to explain them. The analysis of such an unprecedented turn of events beginning in the mid-1970s in the pages of *Telos* as "artificial negativity" ultimately unable to solve the problems it addressed was not meant to celebrate the system's triumph in dominating all, to the point of being able to afford luxuries such as sponsoring its own internal opposition where none existed (e.g., through the financing of its own critics in universities, lush grants to previously excluded groups and support for "community organizers" such as Saul Alinsky, etc.). Rather, contrary to the original Frankfurt School's pessimistic projection of the possible unlimited extension of the existing logic of domination, it was meant to demonstrate how the system did confront intrinsic limitations, that its own

34. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of One-Dimensionality," in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 43-54; and Tim Luke, "Culture and Politics in the Age of Artificial Negativity," in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 55-73.

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growth and development did erode the conditions necessary for its own reproduction, and that its very rationality depended on the presence of that negativity it previously had sought to obliterate — a negativity which, however, could not be subsequently manufactured at will and deployed whenever needed.

Far from projecting a predicament of super-one-dimensionality, this analysis sought to locate the conditions conducive to the explosion of such a predicament, not by recourse to mythological "revolutionary" agencies such as the old proletariat, exploited minorities or oppressed women, whose opposition not only tended to rationalize the system but whose weakness as social movements was itself a symptom of the new rationality crisis, but by locating intrinsic flaws in the very logic of the new system of domination. The main shortcoming of this strategy of managing internal conflicts by sponsoring artificial negativity was that a negativity so generated was no negativity at all — at least to the extent it tended to be a mere extension of the bureaucratic apparatus, thus replicating rather than challenging the logic of the system. In order to fill the void left by the decline of the organic negativity previously provided by spontaneous internal opposition, it was necessary to create the kind of free social spaces allowing the development of genuine organic negativity out of spontaneous rather than bureaucratically managed conflicts, which could once again regulate the system's inherent tendency toward irrational involutions. In other words, the point was to show, contrary to liberal ideologues and whatever remained of a frustrated Left, that history had not and could not end; subjectivity could not be obliterated; and that these were not merely abstract norms but ineradicable features of the very logic of the system.

There was absolutely no contradiction between the earlier phenomenological Marxist account and the artificial negativity thesis. The latter was merely a critique, a correction and an extension of Critical Theory. This articulation of a social analysis at odds with practically everything that at the time passed for Marxism resulted in a belated acknowledgment of the futility of continuing to describe what was being published in *Telos* as "Marxist" in any traditional sense.[35] The demonstration of the primacy of an organic negativity without which the system cannot regulate itself extended the phenomenological analysis without, however, recycling all the cumbersome philosophical baggage or the lingering reductionist economism of most Left perspectives. As systems theory's designation for subjectivity, organic negativity was more directly related to the logic of the whole. The analysis of its dynamics (and that of its artificial surrogate deployed by the bureau-

35. See "Internal Polemics" in *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977), pp. 178-197, with contributions by Paul Piccone, James Schmidt, Robert D'Amico, Bart Grahl, Ferenc Feher and Paul Breines; Murray Bookchin, "Beyond Neo-Marxism," in *Telos* 36 (Summer 1978), pp. 5-28; and "Special Symposium on the Crisis of the Left," in *Telos* 46 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 81-112, with contributions by Paul Breines, Paul Piccone, Tim Luke, Robert D'Amico and Russell Jacoby.

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cratic apparatus in the futile effort to totalize that dimension of being which cannot be integrated without destroying it) was meant to expose the limitations of one-dimensionality and reaffirm the primacy of that same subjectivity elaborated earlier by phenomenological Marxism. In a context where the collapse of the New Left seemed to document a further decline of subjectivity and dash all remaining hopes for rationalizing the system, it was essential to re-emphasize the system's inherent instability and the ineradicability of subjectivity.

D'Amico correctly points out the heterogeneity of positions within the editorial board throughout this period, as well as the effort to reconcile these analyses with an American reality which seemed to remain elusive and distant. He fails to mention, however, the real dead-ends the journal unfruitfully pursued for far too long, before finally discovering a potentially viable political theory as well as its real connections to American reality. The first dead-end was East European Marxism. Not only did most dissidents from that part of the world produce merely moralizing theoretical analyses irrelevant to the problems the journal was attempting to address, but their emphasis on the obvious authoritarian features of their respective communist regimes hid the fact that their vindication of civil liberties, rational discussion, citizenship, etc. tended to propose as a solution precisely the kind of system that in the West had been regarded throughout as a problematic starting point. It is not an accident that, with the 1989 collapse of communism, all those perspectives have become totally irrelevant, not only in the West but even more in the societies in which they were originally developed.

The second dead-end was the attempt to adapt communication theory as a continuation and development of traditional Critical Theory. An eclectic aggregation of standard social theories reworked within a Teutonic lingo and meant primarily to make Western liberalism palatable to a German intelligentsia unacquainted with liberal democratic institutions, communication theory sought to legitimate in an American context the equivalent of an intellectual mandarinate fostering technocracy under the cloak of "undistorted communication" possible only among elite intellectuals and other *de facto* exclusionary liberal practices. It took over a decade to work through these labyrinths before finally rediscovering America and political theory, thanks primarily to the works of two completely different intellectuals: Carl Schmitt (political theory)[36] and Christopher Lasch (populism)[37] in the late 1980s. The first provided a radical critique of liberalism and the modern state, along with a geopolitical and juridical perspective which

36. See "Special Section on 'Carl Schmitt and the Frankfurt School'," in *Telos* 71 (Spring 1987), pp. 37-110, with contributions by Ellen Kennedy, Martin Jay, Alfons Söllner and Ulrich K. Preuss; "Special Issue on Carl Schmitt: Enemy or Foe?" *Telos* 72 (Summer 1987); Paul Piccone and G. L. Ulmen, "Schmitt's 'Testament' and the Future of Europe," in *Telos* 83 (Spring 1990), pp. 3-34; and "Schmitt's 'Testament' and the Future of Europe: Four Responses," with contributions by Wolf Heydebrand, Susan Buck-Morss, Robert D'Amico, Paul Gottfried, Paul Piccone and Gary Ulmen, in *Telos* 85 (Fall 1990), pp. 93-148.

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Marxism and post-Adornian Critical Theory, as part of that same general tradition, never succeeded in developing. The second drew to its logical conclusions the critique of the ideology of progress and precipitated a systematic reexamination of allegedly transcended political traditions such as populism, which retained considerable critical import while articulating values very close to those previously vindicated by traditional Critical Theory.

It is surprising that D'Amico calls for "a new vocabulary for political theory and political analysis that avoids the encrusted concepts of the past" but does not see that "populism, decentralization and federalism" constitute precisely such a vocabulary in the process of redefining and extending earlier analyses. Furthermore, unlike concepts such as "commodity fetishism" and "reification," they are part of current political concerns, even if in distorted and confused forms. He is apparently uneasy with this popularity and, along with other editors, fears that analyses of this type may entail falling into conformist traps. Does the fact that various versions of "populism" and "federalism" happen to be politically relevant make them theoretically any less interesting?[38] Redefined within a phenomenological and dialectical framework, these concepts take on a meaning far more radical than anything presently articulated by people who still see themselves either on the Right or the Left. They vindicate particularity, specificity and otherness, local autonomy and substantial (as opposed to formal and instrumental) rationality against both the old Right's traditional defense of national homogenization, capitalist relations and religious dogmatism, and much of the Marxist Left's traditional statism, New Class ideology and newly-discovered liberalism. In reconstituting the thrust of previous positions within a post-1989 political context, these concepts promise to reinscribe the earlier philosophical defense of subjectivity within an analysis of contemporary realities predicated not on the

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37. See "Symposium on Narcissism" in *Telos* 44 (Summer 1980), pp. 48-121, with contributions by John Alt, Frank Hearn, Russell Jacoby, Stanley Aronowitz, Stuart Ewen, Joel Kovel, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Paul Piccone and Christopher Lasch; Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991), and *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995).

38. See "Special Issue on Federalism" in *Telos* 91 (Spring 1992), with contributions by Robert D'Amico, Paul Piccone, Gary L. Ulmen, Carl Schmitt, M. Rainer Lepsius, Ludger Künhardt and Wolfgang Palaver; and "Special Issue on Federalism II," in *Telos* 100 (Summer 1994), with contributions by Paul Piccone, Gary L. Ulmen, Thomas Fleming, Thomas O. Hueglin, Gus DiZerega and Frederick Johnstone. Recent Supreme Court decisions are beginning to reinterpret the US Constitution along lines indicated in these *Telos* discussions, i.e., toward decentralization and re-empowerment of the states, away from centralizing trends which began after the Civil War. Commenting on the recent "United States vs Lopez" and the "U.S. Term Limits vs Thornton," Linda Greenhouse writes that "it is only a slight exageration to say that the dissent brought the Court a single vote shy of reinstalling the Articles of Confederation . . ." in *New York Times* (Wednesday, May 24, 1995), pp. A1 and A19.

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primacy of economic relations but of the culture and politics which *determine* the nature of these economic relations before they are fully deployed through religious attitudes, a sense of social obligation, and even formal procedures within which capitalist unequal exchange can take place.[39]

Most important of all, the original uneasiness, back in the late 1960s-early 1970s, with facile Left explanations of all evils in terms of capitalist exploitation and the logic of institutionalized greed can finally translate into an alternative and much more credible theodicy which, in reconfiguring fundamental social conflicts, promises simultaneously to redefine contemporary politics. If, contrary to the old base-superstructure mythology according to which all issues were reducible to economic conflicts, the cultural dimension is primary, then control of that dimension becomes decisive. Thus, in positing control of culture as the main political issue, populism and federalism reground the theory of the New Class, originally a standard anarchist position redeployed only during the past few decades by the likes of Djilas and Gouldner to focus solely on divisions within the intelligentsia as a class, in a way that redirects the critique of liberal democracy away from liberalism and back to participatory democratic practices.

Rooted specifically within the American colonial and revolutionary experience, this federal populism is neither purely an American phenomenon nor does it have anything to do with Nazi-like caricatures popularized in the 1950s by Cold War ideologists such as Lipset and Hofstadter.[40] Upon careful scrutiny, it turns out to be closely related to some provocative new departures in contemporary continental thought as, e.g., the French New Right,[41] Gianfranco Miglio's constitutional proposals,[42] etc. Closely modelled on the Swiss experience, Miglio has

39. See the Special Issue on "Populism vs. the New Class," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991, with contributions by Lawrence Goodwyn, Christopher Lasch, Tim Luke, Robert D'Amico, Andrew Fraser, Paul Piccone and Gary L. Ulmen. Years before the Oklahoma City attack and the mass media's discovery of the myriads of militia and other local groups fiercely opposed to the excesses of the central government, discussions of populism in *Telos* emphasized the growing discontent in the countryside, the inability of this discontent to publicly voice its concerns, and therefore the possibility of potential pathological expressions of the repressed anger. The problem remains in a context in which, with the possible exception of radio talk shows, New Class intellectuals tend to monopolize public discussion. Still, the surprising response to Ross H. Perot's populist appeal has already had a decisive impact on American politics, by forcing the established parties to take up the issue of serious government devolution, the reduction of the budget deficit, etc.

40. For a critique of Cold War interpretations of populism, see Lawrence Goodwyn, Democratic Promises: The Populist Movement in America (New York: Oxford, 1976); Robert C. McMatt, American Populism: A Social History 1877-1898 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993); and Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, *op. cit.*,

41. See the Special Double Issue on "The French New Right: New Right — New Left — New Paradigm," *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-Spring 1994).

42. Gianfranco Miglio, "Toward a Federal Italy," in *Telos* 90 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 19-42; and "Special Section on Gianfranco Miglio," in *Telos* 100 (Summer 1994), with contributions by Alessandro Campi, Gary Ulmen, Paul Piccone and Paul Gottfried.

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proposed a reconstruction of the history of the last two centuries not, as has hitherto been the case, solely in terms of the unfolding of an all-encompassing capitalist system, but *also* in terms of the concentration of political power within a nation-state under the firm control of a New Class of politicians, bureaucrats, experts and other parasitic intellectuals.[43] Contrary to the old Leninist model — an extreme Jacobin expression of a much broader New Class vision — the constitution of "social individuality" as the *telos* of Western civilization will probably have to be pursued not only independently of most intellectuals but explicitly against them as a managerial social formation by vindicating direct democracy as the only *real* democracy and the necessary presupposition of a healthy society.

Unconvinced by populism as a political project, D'Amico reduces efforts such as the vindication of direct democracy to the recycling of bankrupt old models responsible for much of 20th century authoritarianism. Yet he does not adduce *any* theoretical arguments to the effect that representative democracy is in any way *better* than direct democracy beyond unwarranted extrapolations from past history. Why is direct democracy "unmediated political power" rather than concrete participation which, in any federal system, need not exclude representation at higher levels? His alternative proposal to forget about political relevance and focus instead on reexamining "the social sciences and their history as part of a larger reexamination of the history of the state" seems terminally academic and politically irrelevant. How is a re-examination of the "social sciences" — a field which even most of its practitioners regard as irreversibly bankrupt — going to provide a new theoretical vocabulary or a new political science? And if the rejection of the infamous "unity of theory and practice" is taken to include all political implications rather than merely the *immediate* instrumentalizations of theory at the service of political expediency, how is one to justify doing theory other than as an irrational aesthetic choice?

Telos' recent populist turn does not constitute a break with the past but the culmination of a quarter century of efforts to relate continental thought to American realities, Critical Theory to concrete politics, and to reunite that subjective moment vindicated by phenomenological Marxism with its otherness presently alienated in Washington and other administrative centers of bureaucratic domination. The dialectic of enlightenment need not necessarily lead to Hiroshima, Auschwitz or the Gulag. With the dogma of a monolitic modernity engendering one particular self-referential cultural model no longer encumbering critical thought, it may be possible to vindicate particularity, specificity and otherness in really existing communities of people constituting their social reality through personal interaction and direct participation in most of the decisions affecting their life. This traditional pre-19th century American perspective is not a romantic myth of "unmediated political power," but a precondition of citizenship and healthy subjectivity. It is not immedi-

43. Gianfranco Miglio, *Una Costituzione per i Prossimi Trent'Anni: Intervista sulla Terza Republica*, ed. by Marcello Staglieno (Bari: Laterza, 1990).

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ately obvious why the mechanical fragmentation of functions postulated by the predominant instrumental rationality is any better than an organic reorganization of social life. This modernist fragmentation is neither more efficient nor more satisfying. Similarly, populism need not always succumb to the imperatives of transnational capital if the community's cultural and political identity has not already been weakened or destroyed. After all, the Amish and the Brethren deal with external capitalist rationality only in *their* terms and have not been known to suffer too much from the debilitating impact of commodity fetishism.

New Class arguments predicated on globalization, complexity and plain distrust of common folks — arguments meant to demonstrate the impossibility of downsizing nation-states to units small enough to allow for participatory democracy and subsequently federalized into larger units able to deal with matters such as defense, money, etc. — remain hopelessly stuck within the horizons of a rapidly fading modernity. The age of instant communication, flexible specialization and microcomputer technology has not only rendered local communities viable social, economic and political units once again, it is also forcing major readjustments within "global" capitalism and bureaucratic administration precisely because of the unfolding of the same dialectic of enlightenment within their highly bureaucratized (and therefore tendentially irrational) internal organizational structure. To the extent that instrumental rationality can operate only within the logic of the concept, it systematically occludes those features of life that cannot be so captured, thus gradually losing control of that reality it pretends to dominate. In rectifying this dysfunction, both capitalist and political administrative apparati increasingly have to redeploy the kind of subjectivity federal populism promises to reconstitute. At any rate, the culmination of phenomenological Marxism and Critical Theory in federal populism successfully reformulates *Telos*' original project to reconcile American reality and European philosophy — a project the Frankfurt School dismissed as impossible shortly after their forced emigration, but much more viable under the changed post-1989 socio-political context.

Conservative Traps

Although elaborated within the pages of the journal over a number of years, this attempt to elaborate a Critical Theory adequate to 21st century realities is far from complete or free from internal problems. In a country whose collective imaginary remains inextricably tied to a long tradition of rugged individualism, talk of "organic" communities, even as part of a broader populist projects, must be expected to run into considerable resistance. Furthermore, to the extent that it questions directly the present monopolistic role of intellectuals in the production and reproduction of culture (the power base of the New Class), it is natural for federal populism to be subjected to the closest critical scrutiny. After all, earlier efforts to recycle concepts such as organic communities during the first part of the 20th century have not been particularly emancipatory. Both fascism and National

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Socialism deployed variations of these concepts to legitimate racist and imperialist policies which precipitated the cataclysms of WWII. The trauma of those events have not only prevented any serious rethinking of these ideas during the past half century, it is probably also responsible for having kept the Frankfurt School from translating its vindication of "particularity, specificity and otherness" into meaningful political projects of social reconstruction having anything to do with the "*volk*." As a result, the first generation of critical theorists chose to go into theoretical hibernation, while their immediate German descendents simply discarded the entire philosophical framework in favor of more respectable but altogether conformist and opportunistic academic alternatives.

The fact that since the end of WWII fascism and Nazism have been demonized and dropped from theoretical discussions has had the fortunate unintended consequence that hardly anyone today remembers the cultural and philosophical frameworks deployed to legitimate their barbaric policies. Consequently, when the Parisian Left-liberal establishment suspected some possible connections between the kind of policies advocated by the New Right and fascist ideology, the French "politically correct" intelligentsia were unable to articulate precisely what it intuited as problematic and ended up embarrassing itself by unleashing a pathological and counterproductive witch-hunt.[44] Whether out of superior theoretical sophistication or because of lack of political memory of phenomena which never had much of an impact in the US, internal *Telos* discussions of populism have successfully avoided counterproductive archeological discussions of this kind.

This does not mean, however, that federal populism is either fully understood or located correctly within *Telos*' historical trajectory. Along with a number of other editors, David Gross fails to realize the extent to which these latest developments are essentially extensions of earlier analyses. He sees the trajectory travelled over the last quarter century as rather discontinuous and suggests not only that federal populism may be a passing fad but that, once it blows over, the journal is likely to return to the cultural pessimism of the first generation of critical theorists. Along with most intellectuals, Gross is simply not all that enthusiastic about "the people," "organic communities" or even "federalism." It is here, however, that the specter of a conservative involution begins to crawl out of the woodwork. If one cannot trust "the people," understood simply as what a given community considers its members (to impose any other definition would be tantamount to deploying an unwarranted external dogmatic perspective), then it may be advisable to stop chattering about "democracy" and start defending the pre-modern view according to which truth obtains independently of the agents living according to or in opposition to it and is accessible only to superior beings capable of those exceptional acts of intellection necessary to apprehend it. This is the secularized Christianity of classical liberalism: the positing of allegedly self-evident

44. See "Appeal to Vigilance by Forty Intellectuals," in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-94), p. 135; and the documents published along with this appeal in *ibid.*, pp. 136-172.

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universally-valid truths transcending all particularistic interpretations. It is not necessary here to indulge in a long critique of absolutism and its long history of repression. It may be useful to ask, however, as to what happens when some of these truths are not altogether self-evident to some people or communities. The *wrong* historical answer has been to *force them* to see the error of their ways. This is precisely why the pilgrims chose to leave a European society engaging in these practices and to form an alternative one in the New World predicated on local autonomy and the axiological heterogeneity of various organic communities. At any rate, liberal insistence on the "obviousness" of particular principles hypostatized to the level of universality is the beginning of all modern authoritarianism politics, committed to imposing "the truth" no matter what. It is also, first and foremost, the ideology of modern imperialism pretending to sponsor democracy and human rights in what often turn out to be covert efforts to extend the hegemony of Western capitalist interests.[45]

Another expression of this conservative involution is the new "generation X" editors' concern with maintaining the journal's traditional "ideological flexibility" by stressing more "concrete political analyses" and de-emphasizing theory. *Prima facie* reasonable objections of this kind were standard fare in every *Telos* meeting in the late 1960s, when unreconstructed Marxists within the group constantly inquired as to what all this theory had to do with the working class and "the revolution," and in the 1970s by traditionally anti-intellectual American critics who assumed all along that their "pragmatism" and common sense was enough of a guide for political analysis. But as Lukács pointed out in the opening pages of *History and Class-Consciousness*, "concreteness" means relation to the totality, i.e., approaching reality from a theoretical perspective able to locate the particular as the embodiment of the universal.[46] Since events do not usually happen to come with a "user manual" explaining precisely how they ought to be interpreted, either historians consciously deploy well-developed theoretical frameworks or else they unconsciously accept the predominant one they inherit from their social milieu. In the first case, it is necessary to pay considerable attention to theory to insure the "concreteness" of what is being studied, i.e., that the events under scrutiny are consciously conceptualized in terms of a broader narrative they simultaneously contribute in redefining. In the second case, the rejection of the primacy of theory paves the way for the implicit deployment of predominant, collectively-shared prejudices and the interpretation of events in terms of the logic of the given. This is precisely what conservatism is all about: to force the new to conform to the old by concealing the pseudo-universality of predominant prejudices in the particularity of historical events presented as "immediately

45. See "Three Interviews with Alain de Benoist" in *Telos* 98-99 (Winter 1993-94), pp. 173-208.

46. Georg Lukács, *History and Class-Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, tr. by Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), p. 10.

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obvious." In the same way that Hegel, in a short essay on "Who Thinks Abstractly?" showed it was not the philosopher engaged in theory who does so but those allegedly engaged in the most "concrete" activities in the marketplace, today it can be shown that the most conservative and conformist historians are not necessarily the ones indulging in theoretical reflections but, rather, many of those pretending to stick exclusively to "concrete political analysis."[47]

This seemingly minor detail takes on larger proportions when contextualized in terms of *Telos'* current concern with New Class domination and its implications. If history since the French Revolution (or at least since Charles Beard) has been written primarily from a New Class economistic perspective, focussed almost exclusively on capitalist expansion and its epiphenomenal social consequences, thus occluding the political and cultural dimension as the domain within which New Class domination obtains, then it is all the more important to emphasize the primacy of theory in future historical studies. If, as Miglio argues, the nation-state has been the main institution through which New Class domination has been exercised during the last two centuries,[48] then no political analysis can pretend to be "concrete" and avoid the charge of conservatism without taking into account the theory of the modern state, the recent invention of "nations" as political units able to deploy new sophisticated modes of domination, and the trajectory of state formation during the past two centuries.

Even more problematic is Jack Zipes' pedagogical excursus, which recycles cold turkey the Frankfurt School's analysis of the culture industry and reduces the artificial negativity thesis to an uncritical extension of it *sic et nunc*. But the original analysis of the culture industry was meant to explain how the mass media had collectivized those socialization processes previously carried out within the family and the community, producing dependent clientized subindividuals rather than autonomous citizens, i.e., people predisposed to be effectively manipulated by advertisement and bureaucratic authority. It sought to explain how it was that the workers would rather drink Pepsy than make a revolution. Artificial negativity, on the contrary, sought to explain why such a brave new world of manipulable subindividuals would result in an increasingly crisis-ridden society whose survival hinged on its ability to reconstitute a minimal internal conflictuality needed to regulate the system, thus requiring precisely that subjectivity the culture industry sought to eliminate. In other words, far from extending what Adorno described as the logic of the culture industry, the artificial negativity analysis entails nothing less than a full reversal of the strategy of homogenization. A careful comparative content analysis of mass media programming in the 1950s and the 1970s would readily reveal major qualitative shifts — from an emphasis on homogeneity and standardized social models to heterogeneity and

47. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Who Thinks Abstractly?" in *Hegel: Texts and Commentary*, tr. by Walter Kaufmann (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

48. Gianfranco Miglio, *Come Cambiare: Le mie Riforme* (Milan: Mondadori, 1992).

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diversity. The particular analyses of cultural phenomena Zipes provides do not show what he claims, i.e., the continuing hegemony of the culture industry's strategy of social homogenization, but only a divergence between his "politically correct" notions of gender homogenization, social hierarchies etc. and the culture industry's new strategy of managed diversification — a strategy more adequate not only to the system's new requirement for artificial negativity but also responsive to new technological developments which have rendered obsolete the standardized mass production of the 1930s and replaced it with a much more sophisticated product diversity able to meet the demand of an increasingly diversified and much more profitable market. To the extent that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of conservatism is the inability to grasp the new as a qualitative break with the old — a reconfiguration of the given, exhibiting previously nonexisting features — Zipes is guilty of creeping conservatism in that he not only misunderstands artificial negativity but attempts to reduce it to a mere extension of the old obsolete culture industry analysis.

Overlooking the perplexing paradox of his own account, whereby he the educator ends up being educated by his own daughter, he fails to heed the most fundamental point Adorno and the rest of the Frankfurt School sought to make, first in 1936 with the analysis of authoritarianism and the family and then in the 1940s with the culture industry thesis, whereby the mass media comes to mediate between subindividuality and capitalist-bureaucratic interests. According to Adorno's broader account of social psychology (having nothing to do with the infamous F-scale and conformist notions such as "the authoritarian personality" developed during the most unoriginal phases of his American exile[49]), social reproduction cannot be reduced to a bureaucratic process of information transferal from one generation to the next but must also transmit that which cannot be communicated conceptually: attitudes, expectations, fears, hopes, fundamental values, etc. Otherwise, the process of individuation is aborted and the result is dependant subindividuality not only susceptible to authoritarian manipulations but spontaneously demanding it. The dialectic of enlightenment obtains in pedagogy as well: the exclusive focus on the conceptual dimension fails if not buttressed by that *lebensweltliche* otherness necessary to constitute a healthy personality. Zipes' daughter is growing up as a healthy individual despite her father's "politically correct" pedagogical delusions, because she is being brought up in a healthy family by loving parents who care about her, which neutralizes whatever damage may be wrought by the New Class ideology her father may see fit to inflict on her. The problems with education and socialization today have less to do with educational institutions as such than with family and community disintegration. i.e., the social agencies responsible for transmitting those broader pre-conceptual components necessary for a healthy socialization. Zipes' call for a

49. See Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven*, *op. cit.*

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more intense "politically correct" pedagogy not only misses the problem but tends to intensify it by supporting those bureaucratic agencies of collective socialization whose growing encroachment on traditional family structures is primarily responsible for the social disintegration he otherwise condemns. No wonder he ends up in a pessimistic predicament as dark as that of the original members of the Frankfurt School.

Identity Logic as New Class Ideology?

Unlike some other editors, who are merely uneasy with the proposal of federal populism as a reformulation, updating and refinement of the original New Left effort to prefigure new institutional arrangements guaranteeing direct democracy, social justice and community integrity, John Michael rejects it outright on the basis of what turns out to be, paradoxically, a New Class version of the Frankfurt School's critique of identity logic. The main thrust of his argument is that domination is ultimately a micrological phenomenon which ends up occluded in global theoretical reconstructions such as those hitherto provided either by the kind of federal populism articulated in *Telos* or similar arrangements advocated by the French New Right. Accordingly, domination is always a local problem predicated on particular differences within communities, which can never be as homogeneous as he thinks federal populism assumes them to be. Since today most communities include a great variety of people with clashing values and different life-styles, languages, religions, races, etc., efforts to force these "different" individuals to conform to any homogenizing community identity occludes cultural particularity and obliterates substantial differences. Adorno's critique of identity logic unfolds roughly along similar lines. On closer scrutiny, however, it turns out to share none of Michael's liberal assumptions concerning subjectivity, community and social psychology. Consequently, it does not lead to conformist conclusions relegitimating the *status quo* and *de facto* New Class domination. The most important differences have to do with: 1) the "particular" Michael and Adorno are concerned with defending against 2) what kind of domination, and in order to achieve 3) which specific objectives.

While in Adorno the particular is a precategorical entity which, as such, transcends the constraints subsequently imposed on it by whatever conceptual structures are deployed to apprehend it, for Michael it is a reified construct already embodying all the characteristics projected upon it by liberal ideology. As part of the organic web within which it immediately finds itself, Adorno's particular does not "naturally" exhibit the kind of identity ascribed to it by implicit or explicit conceptual frameworks subsequently used to articulate it. Unlike in Michael, where the particular's identity comes pre-certified by a liberal ideology pretending to protect it from that constitutive community organicity allegedly threatening to homogenize it, for Adorno it is precisely this precategorical organicity which determines the particular as *unique* and heterogeneous within an immediately given totality

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where every part is by its very nature different from all others. It is not the already conceptually mediated particular of Michael's Enlightenment ideology, according to which the very concept of particularity implies subsumption to an homogenizing pregiven universal, thus equating it with all other similarly determined entities within the same general category. Consequently, to try to defend Adorno's particular by endowing it with liberal rights and entitlements excogitated by those same intellectuals Michael wants to entrust with representing its interest is tantamount to destroying it even more effectively than by saddling it with an extraneous homogenizing community identity.

Since the part-whole dialectic in Adorno presupposes the presence of the structural configuration of the whole within the very constitution of the part to determine its concreteness, any isolation from and contraposition of the particular to its constitutive totality damages its very being by precipitating it into abstraction, reification and, therefore, vulnerability to manipulation and instrumentalization. Emancipation for Adorno means, ideally, the overcoming of the present untruth of the whole, i.e., the generalized reification resulting from the fracture of society into capital and labor, state and citizens, thinking and doing, which is precisely the starting point of Michael's politics. For the latter, social justice has nothing to do with such a totalizing reconstruction. Rather, it seeks merely to guarantee the permanence of the present state of fragmentation where the inadequacy of liberal-capitalist society as a mechanical aggregation of reified particularities necessitates external management by a New Class of experts and professionals, thereby legitimating their domination. Adorno, however, did not advocate anything resembling federal populism. Although he accepted reluctantly Walter Benjamin's famous theses on the philosophy of history, whereby secularized Christian eschatology (liberalism) could lead to hell (totalitarianism) rather than heaven on earth (communism as a society of free subjects),[50] Adorno never really abandoned Marxism's unilinear metaphysics. As a result, he could not even entertain the possibility of recycling allegedly transcended but never realized modes of socio-political organization such as federal populism. Predicated on political units sufficiently small to allow direct participation (and therefore internalization) by concrete citizens, the deployment of these organic communities promises to redirect the dialect of enlightenment by becoming federated in progressively larger units culminating in that otherwise evanescent totality in relation to which concreteness is ultimately attained.

In a nutshell, what is confusing here is that the particularity Michael sees as being forcibly homogenized by the cultural imperialism of one segment of society able to impose its own *Weltanschauung* unwarrentedly hypostatized as community "organicity" on an otherwise heterogeneous aggregation of fragmented

50. Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. with an "Introduction" by Hannah Arendt, tr. by Harry Zohn (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1955), pp. 255-269.

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individuals is not the *lebensweltliche* entity Adorno[51] has in mind but, rather, the abstract individual postulated by liberalism as the fundamental social atom already conceptualized with attributes such as ethnicity, race, religion, language, etc., i.e., that reified client of the managerial state prevented from attaining individuality precisely by such a bureaucratic pseudo-concretization. Adorno's particulars can only thrive as integral parts of some implicit residual organicity which, to the extent it has no status in liberal society, ends up occluded and thus no longer able to constitute that subjectivity without which bourgeois individuality becomes a mere abstract legal attribute for otherwise reified and dehumanized personalities. This is why it is one of the objectives of federal populism to relegitimate organic communities as politically-autonomous legal entities able to provide organicity and thereby constitute that subjectivity which alone can prevent the identity logic of liberal society from destroying their uniqueness and particularity. Ultimately, for Adorno, the problem with identity logic is that, by means of homogenizing concepts, it reduces whatever organic subjectivity remains to precisely the kind of abstract individuality Michael wants to preserve with administrative means.

Here what initially appeared as roughly similar accounts turns out to lead to exactly opposite results. While Adorno wants to save the concrete individual embedded in a rich web of social relations constituting its very being, Michael identifies the problem precisely in this embeddedness, which he regards as arbitrarily imposed. As with New Class concepts so popular within hegemonic liberal academic circles, such as Benedict Anderson's "invented communities,"[52] where the modifier pretends to delegitimate communities unwarrentedly assumed as necessarily *premodern* natural formations rather than *postmodern* possibilities, for Michael community organicity is also an "invented" premodern residue (deployed by the cultural imperialism of interests benefiting from such a deployment) meant to legitimate the homogenization of irreducibly heterogeneous aggregations of individuals. Paradoxically, the identity of these individuals is already constituted by that same residual premodern community organicity Michael's liberalism reluctantly tolerates as private idiosyncrasies, pending their obliteration by the rationality of an allegedly irresistible modernity. Within such a context it seems only natural to propose an alternative model predicated on individual and human rights, multicultural policies, and the kind of representative democracy presently

51. To the extent that Adorno could never come to term with phenomenology after Heidegger's adherence to Nazism, he does not use this distinctly Husserlian terminology — a terminology much more adequate to describe the phenomena in question than the Hegelian, Kantian and occasionally even Freudian alternatives he usually deploys. The result is that he often ends up confusing his readers and occasionally even himself. See Theodor W. Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, tr. by Knut Tarnowski and Frederic Will (New York: Seabury Press, 1973); and *Against Epistemology*, tr. by Willis Domingo (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1983).

52. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983).

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institutionalized in most advanced industrial societies. In other words, he turns out to be fairly satisfied with a *status quo* well on the way to modernizing all, where the existing system seems to need only minor modifications to run smoothly and eventually resolve all conflicts in this, the best of all possible worlds.

What seems to fuel Michael's apprehensions concerning federal populism is a fundamental misunderstanding of organic communities, which he regards as necessarily homogeneous and free of any internal differences or conflicts. Of course, there are no communities of this kind, nor have there ever been. Conflict is an ineradicable feature of human existence and no ideal community organization will ever succeed in eliminating it altogether. Similarly, ever since Abel and Cain, all communities — organic or otherwise — have been characterized by internal conflicts whose constant resolution determines the dynamics of the whole, and aggregated as different groups and individuals trying to live together in more of less harmonious ways. The "organicity" of communities does not entail either homogenization or the disappearance of conflicts. It does entail a sharing of fundamental rules of collective behavior, personal responsibility and a commitment to a given locality as a common domain of interaction. More importantly, organic communities provide a common, internalized culture constituting the collective background needed to facilitate interaction and that crucial mode of communication not dependent primarily on the formal conceptual dimension. This is why they have to remain small enough to allow face-to-face interaction of its constituting members — the kind of direct interaction able to constitute ever new modes of organicity and conducive to substantial cultural modifications fusing and re-fusing its members with ever changing organic identities. While within such a framework the intellectuals' representational work is not thereby rendered superfluous, interpersonal relations remain primary. Organicity is constituted and reconstituted at this precategorical level lived immediately in the first person, with the help of the conceptual mediations periodically deployed to interpret it and endow it with meaning — the task of *organic* rather than distant New Class intellectuals, themselves often members of several such communities, whose values and meaning they can compare and thus elaborate, criticize and reconstitute.

Michael accepts as "natural" the abstract individuality postulated by liberalism and, although he is concerned with internal differences, his notion of community ultimately remains a mere mechanical aggregation of abstract individuals whose premodern idiosyncrasies, when present, warrant legal protection, pending their inevitable eventual rationalization. Far from the dynamic entities they are, constantly redefining themselves and the individuals within them, societies in Michael's account seem stuck once and for all with an unchangeable identity. The ideal here would be a "neutral" value-free social formation regulating the interaction of particular individuals adhering to a variety of differing values. No such thing is possible. The fundamental contradiction of liberal societies evolving toward social democracies, however, is that while they pretend value-neutrality

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they must rely on some particular values hypostatized to the level of universality, which determine constitutional foundations.[53] Thus all societies, liberal or otherwise, have a particular identity all its members inevitably inherit or, in the case of new members, acquire. Multiculturalism can only refer to cultural peculiarities tolerated and guaranteed by the predominant framework. Michael's "forced homogenization" is a pseudo-question: it has nothing to do with imposing extraneous identities but simply with determining the parameters of membership.

The defense of particularity cannot mean the vindication of an identity independent of the predominant inherited or acquired organicity, but participation and immersion in that organicity whose viability and dynamism is a function of its successful internalization by the various members of the community. "Exclusion" here has nothing to do, as in the liberal paradigm, with formal rights and obligations, but with organic embeddedness and concrete participation. Domination cannot be the forcible imposition of extraneous identities, as Michael assumes; it has to do with modes of interaction and socialization. Thus, unlike in Adorno, where domination turns out to be a consequence of an historical aberration in the development of Western culture (the domination of the concept advocated by the Enlightenment, but actually going back to Plato and the very roots of the Western project), in Michael the problem is merely the imposition of an extraneous particularistic identity which, being foreign to the various heterogeneous individuals, places them in a position of objective disadvantage *vis à vis* other individuals whose particular identity is being imposed — that of white heterosexual middle-aged males, presumably Wasps. While the solution in Adorno would entail major social and institutional reconstruction (of the kind envisioned by federal populism), for Michael it would be the like of New Class measures such as affirmative action, quotas and proper crisis management to prevent the imposition of extraneous identities and "unfair" resolutions or social conflicts (i.e., according to illegitimate particularistic criteria).

This helps explain why Michael is so worried about diversity and sees it threatened by any talk of organicity. But in organic communities everyone is different — even if this difference is occasionally oppressive and ascribed within a "natural" social stratification. While in *premodern* communities the allegedly "natural" character of social divisions becomes an obstacle to the constant internal rationalization which keeps these communities from stagnating — an institutionalized reification which helps explain some of the characteristics of traditional society — in *postmodern* communities the criteria of social stratification are necessarily nomological and, therefore, always open to criticism and modification. In both cases, however, what constitutes diversity is always a question *internal* to the particular community, in the same way that the criteria for membership is itself a community matter which cannot be decided in the abstract

53. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991).

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by external intellectuals. This is why aggregations of communities self-defined on the basis of explicit political decisions concerning their identity and boundaries in clusters, clusters of clusters, etc., can only assume a *federal* rather than a *national* character. Within such a framework organicity and diversity are no longer incompatible as they have been for the past two centuries in all nation-states. In fact, the problem of diversity, as Michael formulates it, can obtain *only* within nation-states as New Class projects to homogenize axiologically heterogeneous communities into political units totalized by Enlightenment values deployed by intellectual elites who thereby legitimate themselves in their hegemonic role.

It is surprising that, in order to demonstrate the bankruptcy of the federal populist project, Michael associates it with recent efforts by Samuel Huntington and Arthur Schlessinger, Jr. to relegitimate American hegemony and justify related imperialist undertakings. Interesting and detailed as such an analysis may be, it misses the most fundamental point of federal populism: unlike Huntington's and Schlessinger's approaches, which are predicated on a *national identity* and collectively shared values, federal populism rejects outright the continuing viability and necessity of the nation precisely in order to guarantee the kind of axiological heterogeneity Michael wants to defend by means of a peculiarly "politically correct" brand of liberalism. Since Michael does not seem to appreciate the advantages of this kind of political arrangements, he remains stuck with all the paralogisms typical of conventional liberal-democratic politics meant to apply to large nations with a massified citizenry. This is why he ends up regarding all cultural traits within a given community (the nation) as equally valid, thus deserving equal representation. But no matter how internally differentiated, all communities have their own particular identity against which diversity itself is measured.

It is illegitimate to take the recently-deployed liberal multicultural model (an unwarranted generalization out of pathological New Class-mediated American urban settings) as the standard and try to develop a political framework adequate to such arbitrary projections of what intellectuals think society is. Even in the most diverse of New York's neighborhoods the hordes of different immigrants and "minorities" know very well that they have *chosen* to come to a foreign land tolerant enough to legitimate all sort of *private* practices, but only within the context of an existing cultural and political identity defined in contrast to other similarly constituted political entities, no matter how dynamic and susceptible to change such an identity may be. No immigrant with a minimal sense of realism has ever assumed it legitimate to impose one's old culture on the new country. The rule has always been to adapt to the new culture and contribute to it whatever eventually ends up assimilated. Multiculturalism and bureaucratically-ascribed diversity are phenomena typical only of communities which, successfully colonized by the New Class, have lost their organicity and are thus susceptible to artificial segmentation according to readily identifiable residual traits.

At any rate, New Class advocates for large racial minorities in the US do not

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claim that there is a racially-determined cultural particularity sufficiently strong to warrant particular community self-determination. At best, such separations are postulated as desperate options as a result of exasperation with persistent white racist exclusionary practices. Race and culture are qualitatively different categories. If such was ever the case, as postulated by some pan-African projects in the early 1970s on the basis of allegedly ineradicable white racism, it would constitute a problem for the nation-state of such a magnitude that eventual secession would be inevitable — a problem which does not exist for a federal populism predicated on communities small enough to permit the articulation of cultural particularities predicated on all possible criteria. As for gender and sexual predilections — the two other main characteristics determining "difference" within New Class ideology — the whole issue becomes moot within federal populism, since the question of sexual practices and gender roles is not resolvable *in general* according to the state's pseudo-universal liberal values by merely reducing all to abstract individuality. It is always a matter of particular community values and their institutional otherness.

What really bothers Michael is the downsizing of the role of intellectuals in federal populism. From mediational agents controlling cultural representations within nation-states, they become mere specialists within communities where popular participation tends to encroach on their traditional privileges and prerogatives. They still have a very important role in the production and reproduction of culture, but not as a New Class dominating clientized masses of manipulable subindividuals. The empowerment of the latter into autonomous citizens also means the democratization of the mandarinate. What is at issue is not the abolition of representation, as Michael fears, but the regrounding of these representations within the community legitimating them and the refusal to let these representations substitute for that which is being represented.

Battling Once Again the Windmill of Capitalism

Throughout the 20th century New Class ideology has not only managed to achieve the kind of cultural hegemony capitalism never had, but it has done so in the most sophisticated way possible: by pulling a "sting." Its domination is so effective, it is normally not even recognized as domination. It has been able to do so by expanding its power during times of crises and by appealing to predominant values. Since capitalism is predicated on unequal exchange, the very category of "profit" has always been morally suspect. The massive state expansion and concomitant growth of the New Class since the deployment of the New Deal has been predicated on the need to regulate otherwise devastating capitalist crises and to reintroduce a modicum of social justice in a society threatened by severe economic inequalities. In other words, while usually functioning as a rationalizing agency for predominant capitalist interests, the New Class has always managed to legitimate itself on the pretense of defending underdogs against precisely those

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very same capitalist interests. By mediating between oppressors and victims, exploiter and exploited, privileged and underprivileged, a veritable army of professionals, experts and administrators has come to exercise power in the name of those who allegedly cannot take care of themselves. But in so doing, not only does this group siphon off a substantial chunk of the GNP but, worse yet, it tends to freeze social relations into unchangeable social categories, thus legitimating the necessity of its role in perpetuity. Within such a Robin Hood *Weltanschauung* the Robin conceals the New Class Hood behind the specter of capitalism and the market, usually presented as the *fons et origo malorum*.

The market makes a perfect totalizing enemy: it is impersonal, has no particular location and legitimates itself through a myriad of democratic practices of buying and selling. Marx thought he delegitimated capitalism by pointing out the system's double standard in allowing free market choice only for the capitalists, while workers have no real choice but to sell their labor power. Arguments of this kind sound particularly cynical today, at a time when the problem is no longer the coercion imposed on the seller but the potential buyers' reluctance to buy — a reluctance caused to a great extent by state regulations making labor economically prohibitive. Yet the market and its new and improved version, "globalization," remains the windmill to be conquered not by the old proletarians, most of whom are now more or less permanently warehoused in unemployment offices or being retrained for other rapidly disappearing jobs, but New Class politicians and administrators.

The problem is that, *nolens volens*, the market is a democratic institution aggregating the decisions of whomever participates in it. When all is said and done, complaints about the market are nothing but complaints about the people themselves: it is that same identity logic seeking to remake people in flesh and blood into what the concept of *homo economicus* says people ought to be like. The theodicy of the market is not altogether different from the standard Christian variety: selfishness and greed are the ultimate cause of all problems. Solution: the Grand Inquisitor or its functional equivalent. The disastrous history of the 20th century is a long sequence of these false solutions — even when the blatant racism of the "national" modifier successfully occluded the "socialism" of Nazi ideology. Administrative measures to curb selfishness and greed have produced neither happy nor efficient societies, not to mention "just" ones.

In this respect, David Ost's complaints about *Telos*' failure to criticize the market is not just off the mark but also shortsighted. It is off the mark in that it ignores the authoritarian and economically counterproductive character of all other alternatives. It is shortsighted in that it does not see in the federal populist proposal a viable alternative to market dysfunctions. Since selfishness and greed are cultural traits (which explains why purely economic measures never really succeed in eliminating them), they may be best dealt with by means of a healthy community culture which may prevent them from having their debilitating impact.

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If a community is really against the inexpensive goods that Wal-Mart provides because of the consequences it has on the quality of work, neighborhood shopping districts, etc., then it should vote against it by not shopping in it. Edsels have been known to fail; so will Wal-Marts which do not meet consumer expectations. If, after its local intellectuals have pointed out all the possible collective shortcomings of Wal-Martification, the community still chooses to patronize the store in question, then that community deserves all the undesirable implications of its collective choices. The market can destroy communities only if they are already so weak and disintegrated not to care or understand about the debilitating impact of particular market outcomes.

The New Class arguments Ost deploys against cases such as the above or even worse and more morally problematic ones, e.g., communities practicing segregation, apartheid or even human sacrifices, are inadequate. They presuppose the same unacceptable moral dogmatism he otherwise readily condemns in the Christian New Right whenever the latter seeks to impose its moral agenda on people unwilling to accept it simply through persuasion. Where is it written that human sacrifices, segregation or the death penalty are *universal* evils other than in documents expressing *particular* community values? If so, what right has a particular community or a particular intellectual to impose extraneous values on people unreceptive to them? If the practice of nearby communities is so appalling that it is impossible to tolerate it, there is always the option of *war*, which is immensely more honest than to dogmatically pretend to uphold allegedly universal truths and justice.

Ost finds the very concept of community, not to mention "organic" communities, problematic, because, along with Michael, he also subscribes to a mechanistic Enlightenment ontology positing abstract individuals as the building blocks of purely arbitrary aggregations. This is why he is concerned with protecting minorities, whereas in organic communities predicated on direct democracy majorities and minorities have to eventually reach a *consensus* rather than legitimating decisions on the basis of a mere plurality. This is also why he questions community boundaries as arbitrary. Here Schmitt's argument concerning community definition as the result of a collective political decision is essential.[54] Challenges to such acts entail war: a *civil* war if the dissenting outsiders win, or a war of *independence* if the self-constituting community succeeds in defending its independence. Usually, however, the situation is considerably less drastic and communities are constituted over time by physical contiguity, common interests and eventually a shared culture.

All this smacks of particularity and concreteness. Ost wants none of it. He prefers conflicts to remain abstract: *class* conflicts involving only the economic side of life and therefore resolvable through "rational" means. What is this but

54. Carl Schmitt, *Der Nomos der Erde im Völksrecht des Jus Publicum Europaeum* (1950), (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1974) 2nd edition.

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another way of reintroducing the old and long-since discredited class-struggle that never was, whose only positive outcome, if not the infamous "dictatorship of the proletariat," would have been the equally obsolete social-democratic state? Ost may not see anything wrong with the latter, if only the rich accepted the fact that they must pay taxes and take responsibility for social problems. He thus misses the lessons of the former Soviet Union and Western welfare states, whose unfolding inevitably undermines the possibility for their own reproducibility. When all is said and done, Ost's objections boil down to nostalgia for the good old pre-1989 days of "socialist dreams" when the proletariat was the proletariat, the enemy was immediately obvious and there were no ambiguities about right and wrong. What can be more "conservative" than the effort to invent a fictitious narrative by projecting into the future the illusions of a past that never was?

Not surprisingly, Ost also longs for the long gone Manicheanism of the Cold War years of his youth, when Left and Right were clearly defined. This is why he struggles to come up with five criteria he thinks define the Left. Unfortunately, they do nothing of the kind. The first, a critique of capitalism, has been a defining characteristic for a substantial sector of the traditional Right, first and foremost the ideologists of the so-called "conservative revolution" in Germany between the two world wars and the "paleoconservatives" in the US today. Ironically, the Left worldwide, from Beijing to Paris and Rome (but not in the historically backward Eastern Europe where political consciousness has trailed the West by at least half a century) has long ceased to articulate any critiques of capitalism. The only people still worried about the the debilitating impact of capitalism are the traditional conservatives who see it, along with Ost, as undermining communities and, against Ost, as destroying "natural" social hierarchies.

The second defining criteria for the Left, antagonism to social hierarchies, is inaccurate. The orthodox socialist Left never bought this and for most of the rest of the Left, especially the Marxist wing, the antagonism is only to *illegitimate* social hierarchies. There has always been the question of the dependent old and young unable to make meaningful decisions, or of the division of labor demanding clear authority and decision-making prerogatives. Only within Enlightenment ideology, according to which human beings are reduced to interchangeable abstract units susceptible to statistical manipulation, are all social hierarchies always nomological and therefore suspect. In organic communities and in real life, social hierarchies constantly assert themselves and the only meaningful issue has to do with their legitimacy.

"Sensitivity to the plight of marginalized people," Ost's third criteria, is also no Left monopoly. The Right — especially the religious Right — has always been concerned with the poor and the marginal, but not as state wards to be administratively dealt with by formal bureaucracies run by New Class professionals whose salaries and benefits usually soak up most of the state's welfare budget. Rather, the Right has always emphasized *charitas* as a direct personal relation which,

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mediated by the community's organicity, redeems the marginals much better than do state-run organizations.[55] Not only does the Left have a long history of instrumentalization of marginality to legitimate New Class hegemony, but to the extent that the relations it establishes between redeemers and redeemed remain formal and external, they precipitate no personal chatarsis and, as a result, tend to leave things exactly as they were. As an abstract intention triggered by purely logical considerations ascribing responsibility for all marginality to the social system within which it obtains, "sensitivity" lacks that "love" necessary to insure personal growth and social reintegration. Consequently, it fails to bind the giver and the receiver and, from the viewpoint of the "sensitive" activist, degenerates to a garden variety of narcissism, while from that of the passive marginal it turns into a more or less successful "hustle."

At a time in which the only organized political groups in the US questioning the authority of the central government are militias and the like, described by the pc media as "right-wing extremists," while most of the Left seems to be concerned primarily with distributional criteria for the various pork-barrel projects funded by the state, it is preposterous to claim that the Left, except for rather marginal anarchist groups, is in any way "skeptical" of state power. Today the Left thrives on it and, if it still has any consistent identity, it has to do with statism or, at best, the elimination of traditional exclusionary mechanisms, not to insure "broad participation in public life" (Ost's fifth criteria), but primarily to rationalize and modernize what it regards as archaic social residues allegedly responsible for social dysfunctions. Unlike the traditional European Right, which from the French Revolution to the beginning of the Cold War sought quixotically to vindicate premodern social hierarchies and other bygone feudal structures, most of the American Right has been democratic since the War of Independence, i.e., concerned with the broadest possible political participation, often predicated on a concept of citizenship tied to property ownership. The Right's opposition to the plebe's participation in civic affairs, ever since the times of Cicero, has had to do primarily with preventing manipulation of an uninformed and unprepared public opinion rather than with class, ethnic or racist considerations.

Thus Ost's vindication of a distinct Left outlook does not bear careful scrutiny and quickly reveals itself as a conservative exercise in applied nostalgia. Compounded with his rejection of "organic" communities, which along with the few remnants of the Old Left he regards as archeological curiosities long since fossilized out of political existence rather than objective possibilities whenever people interact over time in a common location, his outlook exemplifies precisely the kind of New Class ideology presently blocking whatever emancipatory possibilities remain. In opposition to, and much more conservative than D'Amico, who does

55. For a candid account of the superiority of private initiative over public charity, see Salli Tisdale, "Good Soldiers. Why Liberals Should Love the Salvation Army," in *The New Republic*, Vol. 210, No, 1 (January 3, 1994), pp. 22-27.

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call for new concepts but immediately reduces them to exhausted variations of the old when they do actually come along, Ost is not even interested in anything new and, if and when something novel does happen to be introduced, he wants it subjected to the kind of methods of inquiry originally refined by the Spanish Inquisition to establish veridical credentials. *Telos* has never been known to go easy on anyone, least of all on itself and its editors. Thus Ost's challenge is not out of line. He should remember, however, that his epistemological rack does not discriminate between Left and Right, New Class ideologues and populists. As has often been the case in the past, the Inquisitors themselves are often likely to come under scrutiny and thus receive the same treatment.

Beyond Conservatism

Conservatism is usually understood as the attempt to hold on to the past by those who cannot adapt to the present or the future. At a time when the collective amnesia of a generation raised on MTV tends to collapse the past in the immediacy of the image, traditional conservatism may take a new radical role. As Gross has put it, by refunctioning alternative models, tradition provides the means to establish a critical distance from an otherwise ubiquitous present whose very being constitutes its own legitimation.[56] Since the past cannot return other than in the guise of something different from the given, today it is likely to play a different, radical role. The same goes for religion and whatever else can provides organizational principles not predicated on the commodity form and its New Class otherness, the social engineers necessary to provide the managerial know-how to hold such a disintegrating society together. In a post-1989 world, which has shed the linearity of modernity, past and future are no longer straitjacketed into a repressive sequence where what is next automatically transcends what preceded it. Unlike in contemporary Star-Trek science fiction, where modernity takes its revenge by collapsing all temporal particularities into a new and improved hi-tech one-dimensionality, the past idealized reconstructions and future utopian projections come to function as possible alternatives in a present when an unprecedented plethora of options is matched only by the limitations of the collective vision. Within such a context, conservatism takes on a new meaning. It has nothing to do with the impossible attempt to recycle the past. Rather, it becomes the inability to transcend the present.

The fact that, having published 100 issues, many *Telos* editors seem reluctant to stray beyond a reality limited exclusively to a present which, so impoverished, seems doomed to irreversible decline, betrays conceptual fatigue and helps

56. David Gross, *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992). Cf. also "Symposium on *The Past in Ruins*," in *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), pp. 5-102, with contributions by David Gross, Tim Luke, Sang-ki Kim, Jack Zipes, Deborah Cook, Robert D'Amico, John Michael, Russell Jacoby, Paul Gottfried, Theodor W. Adorno, Alain de Benoist and Paul Piccone.

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explain some of their unintended conformism. In the opening pages of the *18th Brumaire,* Marx bemoaned the widespread tendency to approach the future from the perspective of the past, thus reinventing precisely that present in need of radical modification. Today's predicament is even worse: unburdened of the heritage of the past, the present has even lost the capacity to reinvent itself. Calls to focus on concrete political analyses, pay attention to the plight of the poor, protect a diversity threatened by homogenizing community identity or to reform education to insure a politically correct indoctrination seem obsessed with preventing the system from deteriorating much further or, at best, to patching up the present so that, like an old jalopy, will at least make it through the summer. All this makes FDR, Kennedy and Johnson — not to mention Bernstein and Kautsky — appear like flaming revolutionaries. It is light-years away from the old dreams of a new society, a sense of the future as possibility, redemption and well-being — that very *telos* Husserl saw eclipsing in the late 1930s but which seemed realistic enough in 1968 when the journal was originally launched.

In this sense, then, there has been a conservative involution within *Telos.* Maybe the attempt to reformulate the New Left project in terms of a federal populism is another exercise in theoretical futility. Or maybe the vindication of the ideals of the original American colonial model (without all the brutal trappings Michael has described so vividly[57]) can help revive the possibility of direct democracy, community life and that healthy socialization necessary for the constitution of citizens *qua* autonomous individuals — something the tendentially totally administered society does not seem able to produce. The fact bemoaned by so many editors that both federalism and populism happen to be on the current political agenda, not only in the US but also in much of Europe, may not be as terrible as it seems. Adorno and many of the original critical theorists consciously deployed an impenetrable philosophical language to protect their analyses from integration

57. It is not immediately obvious why Michael goes into such gory details in his attempt to discredit localism. That kind of brutality he finds in Crevecoeur was common throughout the world until very recently. Today it shocks genteel suburban academics only because they have forgotten how close it still is to the present. It is not necessary here to reread Foucault to find the extent to which the peculiar practices Michael redescribes were standard punitive measures in most of the world. Similarly, throwing in racial implications does not help his case against federal populism, nor does it demonstrate that local conflicts are managed by exporting difference. People who killed kings, masters or (in a case witnessed by my mother no more than a generation ago) stole religious relics were summarily quartered, hacked to pieces and burned alive — whether they were black or white, rich or poor, local or foreign. Similarly, there is nothing extraordinary about seeing the criminal as the "outsider," the "other" or the "foreigner." Theories of penology from Beccaria to Hegel saw crime as alienation from the community. Consequently, punishment was the criminal's mode of reintegration. Within such a context, difference is neither invented nor repressed: it is the consequence of certain types of forbidden behavior, whose ostracism reinforces community identity. Not only is there nothing particularly reprehensible in this; it has nothing to do with whatever axiological heterogeneity there may be in the community.

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into the system they sought to criticize. They did so because their vision of a rational society seemed so distant from what the existing system was about that there could be no conceivable reconciliation. Although as fiercely capitalist and bureaucratized as ever, after 1989 the US can no longer define itself against a totalizing other to legitimate its internal flaws. Consequently, at this point, notwithstanding frantic efforts by ideologues such as Huntington to locate a new "other" in Islam able to take the place of "the evil empire," the system finds itself aimless and in desperate need of redefining itself. The federal populist proposal, predicated as it is on some of the country's most cherished traditions, may not be as hopeless a possibility as it may seem — coming from a journal such as *Telos*.

As Gross has pointed out, however, most people connected with the journal are not in immediate contact with "the people." If and when such a contact may take place, not only is there likely to be some disappointment with the political material one would have to work with, but it is unlikely the theoretical subtleties of federal constitutions or the social-psychological implication of direct democracy will be immediately obvious to the targeted audience. The people most likely to find these ideas in any way interesting are precisely those New Class intellectuals designated as the most substantial part of the problem. This is indeed a paradoxical predicament, but nowhere as paradoxical as that confronted either by Critical Theory in the 1940s and 1950s, or the New Left in the 1960s.

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